THE WORKS OF LOUIS DE BLOIS

COMMONLY CALLED LUDOVICUS BLOSIUS

I.—A BOOK OF SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTION

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A BOOK
OF
SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTION

(INSTITUTIO SPIRITUALIS)

By

LUDOVICUS BLOSIUS

Translated from the Latin
by

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

THE following treatise on the spiritual life, written by the venerable Abbot Blosius, is called in the Latin original *INSTITUTIO SPIRITUALIS*, which I have translated, BOOK OF SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTION. It was published, as the author himself says in his letter to Florentius de Monte, in the year 1551, when Blosius was forty-five years old and had been Abbot of Liessies for twenty-one years. He was therefore in the prime of life, and full of ripe experience in the government of souls.

The first appendix to the treatise is drawn from the works of John Tauler, of the Order of St Dominic, and is a striking testimony to the high estimation in which Blosius held "the illuminated doctor," as Tauler used to be called by his admirers.

The second appendix consists of *Endologiæ*, or interior conversations with our Lord to help devout souls in mental prayer.

The third appendix I have not translated. It is a defence of Tauler against the attacks of John Eck, who had falsely attributed to him several errors that Blosius shows were

never advocated by Tauler. But as the accusations of Eck are now forgotten, their refutation would not be interesting.

Ludovicus Blosius, or Louis de Blois, was a Benedictine monk of great reputation for sanctity and learning in the sixteenth century. He was born in October, 1506, at Donstienne, near Liège, and died in January, 1566, in his sixtieth year. His life was therefore passed amidst the troublous times of the great revolt against the Church, and his controversial writings show how keenly he felt the miseries of the age.

This book, though short, is full of heavenly wisdom and unction. It is a golden treatise. Its chief excellence seems to me to lie in this—that Blosius directs the eye of the soul away from itself, its own miseries and shortcomings, to God, his beauty and perfection. *Oculi mei semper ad Dominum, My eyes are ever on the Lord,* might be taken as the motto of the work. If souls aiming at holiness can only be got to look at God instead of at themselves, the battle is more than half won, victory becomes certain.

Everything suffers from translation, and I am only too painfully conscious how the calm, dignified, lucid sentences of Blosius lose in my imperfect rendering. Still, those who cannot read Latin will be able to draw

even from the translation many wholesome draughts of spiritual wisdom.

The object held before the soul is union with God. For this came we into the world, and Blosius shows us practically how we are to aim at this exalted end. His teaching, though mystical, is eminently practical; though humiliating, it is encouraging; and though pointing to the highest things, the style is simple, plain and intelligible.

In order to avoid the inconvenience of many explanatory footnotes in the course of the work, it may be useful to make a few remarks about mystical theology, and to explain certain expressions used by Blosius and authors he quotes, especially in Chapter XII and in the appendix.

First, as to the meaning of the phrase mystical theology.

Theology is the science that deals with God and divine things, the truths revealed by God and all that results from revelation.

The word mystical means secret, hidden, obscure.

Mystical theology, therefore, is that part of the general science of theology which treats about the secret and hidden union of the soul with God. It is also used, as in the present treatise (Chap. XII), to denote the actual experimental union, in itself, with God.

Taken in this sense, it may be defined as "The most perfect and exalted contemplation of God, and the most sweet love of God intimately possessed and enjoyed."*

What is contemplation?

By contemplation is meant the raising up of the mind to God by *intuition*, accompanied by most ardent love. We mean by *intuition* a mental sight or view of the mind, seeing truth without the intervention of argument, testimony or reflections. So our mind sees by intuition that twice two make four, but a complicated mathematical truth has to be arrived at by much argument and reflection.

The contemplation of mystical theology must be accompanied by ardent love, because it is not a purely speculative and intellectual intuition of God, but must affect the will also. It is an experimental perception of God, not merely speculative, practical as well as theoretical; it is a union of will with him, and not a mere intellectual apprehension.

This contemplation may be ordinary or extraordinary.

The ordinary contemplation means a close union with God in intellect and will, which is the result of faithful correspondence to the grace he bestows according to the ordinary

* Thomas à Vallgornera, O.P., i, 5.

laws of his providence in the supernatural life.

Extraordinary contemplation is a singular and miraculous union of mind with God, by simple intuition, accompanied with most ardent love, exceeding the ordinary laws of Providence in the supernatural order.

St Thomas* teaches that the knowledge we may have from grace is twofold. The first kind is speculative only, in the intellect, as when certain secret truths are revealed to anyone by God. So far as this knowledge is concerned, it would not be lawful to doubt, or to desire to test whether the will of God is good, or whether God is sweet. We know both by the teaching of faith.

But there is another knowledge of the divine will or goodness which is affective and experimental. This results when a soul actually experiences within itself the taste of the divine sweetness and a delight of love in the divine will.

This last is properly called wisdom, understanding the word *sapientia* (wisdom) to be *sapida scientia* (savoury knowledge)—that is, knowledge or science accompanied by a savour or relish in the will: the relish, namely, of love.

Here it may very likely occur to the mind to ask whether it would be prudent and praise-

* II-II, qu. 97, art. 2 ad 2.

worthy for devout souls to desire the gift of contemplation and to pray for it.

Extraordinary contemplation, which is a purely gratuitous gift of God, exceeding the ordinary laws of his providence in dealing with the souls of his faithful ones, should certainly not be desired, and therefore no one should ask for such a favour in prayer. Humility teaches this. We should no more presume to ask for extraordinary contemplation than for the gift of miracles or prophecy.

As to ordinary contemplation the case is different. This also is a gift, purely gratuitous on the part of God, but one not above, or forming an exception to, the ordinary laws of his providence, in the supernatural order, for the conduct of souls. Though it cannot be merited, strictly, by any amount of care or faithfulness to grace, it may, by profound humility, constant mortification and recollection, be merited *de congruo*—that is, we can dispose ourselves for it by the practice of virtue and by intense longing, not for God's gifts so much as for God himself; thus we may so far remove the obstacles that we may hope that God, in his goodness, mercy and liberality may bestow it on us.

Ordinary contemplation is that interior gift of prayer by which God visits the faithful soul, filling its powers with supernatural

light and embracing it in the spiritual arms of his love. Prayer, without the gift of contemplation, is the lifting up of the mind to God by the help of grace, and asking God for what we want. Ordinary contemplation is the visit of God to the soul, during which he shows himself to the soul by a divine light and embraces the soul in love.

This may manifestly be done by God in many different degrees. It may be only for a brief moment or for a longer time. It may be frequent or seldom, it may be given only a short time before death.

This visitation of God, a high degree of which is spoken of in Chapter XII, may be desired and prayed for by a devout soul without presumption, if it be done humbly, sincerely, and for God's glory.

(*a*) It may be desired, because in itself it is good, in fact the highest good, for it is union* of mind and will with God. Charity, love of God for his own sake, is the one thing for which we were created, the one object which we ought to desire. The gift of contemplation increases charity, and therefore in itself is lawful to be desired.

(*b*) It may be prayed for. St Thomas†

* Psalm xxxiii 9 and xli 2 are considered invitations to desire this union with God.

† II-II, qu. 83, art. 6.

teaches that we may lawfully pray for anything that we may lawfully desire; in fact, what is prayer except the expression of our desires to God, mentally or in words? But this must be done with certain conditions, in order to be free from presumption.

(*c*) The first condition is humility. The soul must acknowledge how utterly unworthy it is of so high a grace as even the lowest degree of ordinary contemplation. It must be asked as a gratuitous favour: *Bow down thine ear and hear me, for I am needy and poor.**

(*d*) The second condition is sincerity. By this is meant that the soul must show a sincere and genuine desire for this most excellent union with God, by the practice of that universal self-denial and constant recollection spoken of by Blosius. To pray for it without doing these things is a mere delusion of self-love. If we only *say: As the hart panteth after the water-springs, so panteth my soul after thee, O God,*† and yet neglect the necessary means to approach him, the desire is not sincere. The thirsty stag runs towards the water-springs.

(*e*) A third condition is that the motive of the prayer should be, not our own self-interest or self-exaltation, but God's glory.

The gift of ordinary contemplation is not

* Ps. lxxxv 1. † Ps. xli.

necessary for salvation or for holiness. Many most holy souls never receive it. Many who have never received it, even once for a passing moment, may be far holier than others who have had the gift. Therefore the prayer must be conditional, if it would be for God's glory and according to his will.

It would be safer, therefore, and more in keeping with the ordinary practice of holy souls, not to ask in a direct way for contemplation, but to beg for perfect pardon of sin, pure love of God for his own sake, and the grace of a holy death; leaving to God to decide whether the gift of contemplation would be beneficial for our souls. It might, good as it is in itself, be hurtful to us.

Is the contemplation spoken of by Blosius in Chapter XII extraordinary or ordinary?

So exalted is the union with God described in this chapter that at first sight we should suppose it must be the extraordinary gift, beyond the ordinary laws of God's providence in the supernatural order.

But I am inclined to think the opposite. I venture to think that, high as is this union with God, it is within the scope of ordinary contemplation, no doubt in a very exalted degree, but still within the limits of God's ordinary laws, and not implying a distinct miracle in the supernatural order.

I am led to this conclusion because Blosius, so careful and accurate a theologian, heads Chapter XII with these words: "What a spiritual man may hope for if he perseveres in the practices laid down in this book."

Now certainly what we may hope for and desire we may pray to obtain. But extraordinary contemplation it would be wrong and presumptuous either to pray for, hope for or desire. Therefore what is described in Chapter XII must be, although extremely high and uncommon, still within the limits of God's ordinary laws in the supernatural order.

Many humble, fervent souls no doubt enjoy a considerable degree of ordinary contemplation without being aware of it or adverting consciously to it. It unites their wills easily, promptly and constantly to the will of God. It is better for them to have it, and yet not to know their own happiness.

If any souls, shallow in spiritual life, not having yet lived for a long time in the practice of brave self-denial, external and internal, should fancy they possess the gift of contemplation even in a low degree, they may feel sure they are deceived by self-love. They are probably mistaking the sweetness with which God attracts beginners and weaklings to his service for the solid food of the strong.

In all ordinary cases*—for no absolute rule can be laid down about a gratuitous gift of God—the gift of even ordinary contemplation in the lowest degree is not bestowed on any soul that has not manfully *walked through the valley of the shadow of death* by complete mortification under the guidance of God's hand. To mistake the first sweetness of the early spiritual life for the gift of prayer and contemplation would be like mistaking the first glimmer of dawn for the brightness of noonday. It would be like the self-conceit of a boy who were to imagine himself an accomplished scholar because he had mastered the Greek alphabet.

Now St Thomas, and with him the other holy writers, as, for instance, Blosius in this treatise, as well as Dionysius and John Tauler quoted by him, are accustomed to call the mystical union with God in contemplation by many and various names.

Among these are often found very strong expressions, such as " transformation " and even " deification."

They speak of the soul in the union of contemplation as being " carried away into God," " absorbed in God," " made one with him," " taken up into the divine darkness," " being born of God."

* See first paragraph of Chapter XII.

In all these and many other similar phrases they are endeavouring, as best they may, to express what is ineffable and above our understanding. By these strong expressions they indicate, or rather typify, the marvellous union of love between God and the soul, which is incomprehensible to us who have not experienced the mystical union with God in our own souls. *Taste and see*—unless you actually taste you can know indeed by faith that the Lord is sweet, but you cannot have the experimental knowledge of love.

But none of these expressions mean, or are ever intended to mean, that the soul can be so transformed into God, or deified, as to lose its own identity and to become God. The soul always, both in heaven and earth, remains God's creature. Its own finite nature could not, even by the power of God, become the divine nature.

This would be the error known as pantheism, not only heretical, but also philosophically absurd.

By these and similar expressions Blosius and other holy writers only intend to indicate, as forcibly as they can, the wonderful closeness of spiritual union between the purified soul and the infinite majesty of God in mystical contemplation.

St Paul, in describing the miraculous

ecstasy or rapture granted to him, during which he is actually supposed to have been temporarily favoured with the beatific vision, declares that it was impossible for him to convey to us in human language the wonders he had seen and heard. These words, he declares, *it is not granted to man to utter.**

When, therefore, writers of mystical theology endeavour to describe in human language the ineffable truths of divine union, they are obliged to employ words that may appear to imply, or may be construed to imply, false doctrine, though they also bear a legitimate and orthodox interpretation.

The same is the case in the Bible. For instance, St Peter says boldly of the precious promises of God that by them *we may be made partakers of the divine nature.*† Now, no one imagines for a moment that St Peter means that we are able, by these promises, to become God. We know that the Apostle desires to impress upon us by these sublime words the intense closeness and reality of our union with God by grace in this world and by glory in the next.

A similar observation can be made concerning the words of our Lord himself in Apoc. iii 21.

Again, comparisons also used by holy

* 2 Cor. xii 4. † 2 Pet. i 4.

writers must not be pressed too far or they may imply error. As, for instance, when Blosius says in Chapter XII, page 127, that the soul is united to God as "gold and brass are welded into one mass of metal," the comparison is only true as to the reality and closeness of the spiritual union, but no further. Gold and brass welded together would form a mass of metal, neither pure gold nor simple brass, and in this there is no likeness to the mystical union of contemplation.

Some of the expressions of Blosius and authors quoted by him (Chapter XII, etc.) might appear at first sight to favour the errors condemned by the Church under the name of Quietism.

What is Quietism?

The system of false mysticism known as Quietism was taught by a Spaniard named Miguel de Molinos, and was condemned by Innocent XI on November 20, 1687.

This system, as clearly against all common sense as against the teaching of theology, was called Quietism because its authors taught that the soul in union with God by love should be absolutely quiet, meaning by this that it ought not in any way to use its own powers—that is, its memory, understanding and will—but that it ought to be utterly and entirely passive, only suffering the action of

God, but not corresponding by acts of the will. The soul ought, according to the Quietist theory, to annihilate its own powers and to become like a dead body.

Sixty-eight propositions were extracted from the book written by Molinos, and they were censured as, some actually heretical, some suspected of heresy, others erroneous, scandalous, blasphemous, offensive to pious ears and rash.*

Amongst other things Molinos contended that the " interior life consists in annihilating the powers of the soul "†—that is, the memory, intellect and will. St Thomas, on the contrary, teaches that they should be employed in God's service.

From this false principle Molinos proceeded to draw the following conclusions: That to desire to work in an active way, by interior acts of faith, hope, charity, contrition, etc., is to offend God, who wills himself to be the only one acting; that the soul should remain utterly motionless, like a dead body; and that to remember anything however holy, even the words and actions of Christ and his saints, to reflect on anything however holy, to examine the conscience, to make any petitions, to thank God for anything would be imperfect and would impede union with God. In

* See Denzinger's *Enchiridion*. † Prop. 1.

Proposition 14 he teaches that souls united to God in contemplation ought not to ask God for anything, though our Lord says, *Ask;* nor ought they to thank God for anything, though St Paul says, *In all things give thanks, for such is the will of God for you all,* and, therefore, for souls leading an internal life of love. "Petition and thanksgiving," says Molinos, "are both acts of self-will." He opposed the exercise of meditation, declaring that souls who use it do not adore God in spirit and in truth (Prop. 18).

Like all false systems, this one, which is a medley of nonsense and impiety, possesses a certain amount of half-truth, which lends it plausibility. It is mysticism gone mad.

The orthodox spiritual writers use expressions that, at first sight, may seem to favour Quietism, especially those who, like Blosius and Tauler, wrote before the time of Molinos, but a moment's consideration will show that they meant by these expressions a totally different doctrine. For instance, it is true that they speak of the soul being "passive" under the action of God, but not in the sense of the Quietists. It is manifest that, if God deigns to visit a soul, to enlighten it, speak to it, embrace it in love, the soul ought not to turn away to remember or to reflect on other things, however holy, which might

render it inattentive to God. To do so would be gross impertinence.

If the Pope were to favour us with an audience, should we, while His Holiness was speaking to us, refuse to listen and begin to converse with others?

In this sense Blosius tells us that "every image of perishable things, yea, even a thought about the angels, or even of the Passion of Christ, or any intellectual reflection," impedes mystical union.

The Quietists would go on to say that a spiritual man should never reflect upon these holy things, but Blosius, on the contrary, declares that "at other times they are most useful to be received and entertained."

The Quietists say: "Never think or reflect on anything however holy, never ask for anything, never thank God for anything."

Blosius says: "In the moment in which God deigns to visit you and speak to you, humbly listen to him, and do not rudely interrupt him to talk of other things, or even to ask for things from him, although at other times you should certainly make petitions for them."

By being "passive" the Quietists mean that you should be like an inanimate thing, like a log, without memory, understanding or will.

By being " passive " Blosius means us to follow the lead of God, not to strike out a path of our own; to " let his mind be in us " instead of using our own ideas; to conform our wills to his, not to try to bend his will to ours.

To illustrate the difference, suppose a man ascend a dangerous and lofty mountain of which he is utterly ignorant. Common sense would tell him to be utterly passive by following exactly the footsteps of his guide, and being led by him even against his own judgement. You would advise him to " forsake " and " annihilate " his own ideas and wishes, and to put himself entirely into the hands of his guide, to follow him passively. But you would not mean that he must not keep his eyes open, must not use his limbs, must not lift his feet, but must be dragged along like a dead body or a senseless log. In this sense he must be most active.

So also the Catholic writers tell us to be passive by following God; remembering him and not other things except for him; reflecting on him, and not on other things that distract from him; desiring him and not other things except for him and according to his will. This is to be passive. But even in the moment of the highest contemplation the soul must be in utmost activity, listening, looking, desiring and uniting its will to God.

The Catholic writers mean us to follow our guide passively up the mountain of perfection; the Quietists would have us lie motionless and inactive to be dragged up to the summit.

In accordance with these principles Blosius, when he says (Chap. XII, p. 134), " Whilst the powers of the loving soul are silent or quiet, and their own activity is stilled to rest, and they are free from every image, God himself speaks and influences the powers of the soul as he pleases," does not mean by these words that the powers of the soul should be annihilated in the sense of Molinos, but that they should put away their own remembrances, reflections and desires in order to listen to God. This is to be in one way passive, in another active.

In order to dispose the soul for union with God by removing impediments, Blosius and all Catholic writers tell us to try to forget all useless matters, not to reflect upon idle, unnecessary thoughts that do not promote union with God, and to forsake all desires that are not from God, in God and for God. This they often call " death," " annihilation," " being passive," and other similar things. The Quietists tell us not to remember, reflect upon or desire anything, even God or things God wills us to think of and desire. Blosius

lays down the sane principle that when we think of matters that God wills us to reflect upon, and because he wills it, we are thinking of God, though indirectly. So if a man's state of life obliges him to teach mathematics, to cook a dinner, or to drive a steam engine, if he reflects on these matters because it is God's will, he is *indirectly* thinking of God. He loves God with his mind, by thinking for his sake of the things he desires him to reflect upon. When St Paul, who enjoyed so exalted a state of contemplation, made tents, he remembered how to make them, reflected upon it, and in this way indirectly he was thinking of God, because he was thinking of those things God willed him to reflect upon. We cannot in this world be as the angels of God who ever see the face of the Father. This will be enough to prevent any possible misconception in reading the words of Blosius or Tauler.

At the same time the tendency of modern spirituality, and especially Anglo-Saxon spirituality, is certainly not in the direction of Quietism. Sometimes it would undoubtedly be beneficial if souls who desire union with God would seek a little more quiet, not only external, but above all internal, by silencing their own conversation with themselves and listening more to God.

One more observation. The Quietists declare that to desire perfection, progress, virtue, etc., is an act of self-will. This is one of the condemned propositions: "12. He who has given his free will to God ought to have no care about anything, neither about hell nor heaven; nor ought he to have any desire for his own perfection, for virtues, for holiness, for his own salvation, of the hope of which he ought to purify himself."

Is there any half or at least quarter truth in this monstrous proposition?

As it stands, common sense condemns it as unmitigated nonsense.

But when a soul has acquired perfect resignation and love, it is true that it ought not to care about anything except what unites it to God. It is true that we ought to fear hell not merely from hatred of our own personal suffering, but chiefly because hell means separation from God and absence of his love; that we should desire heaven not merely because it is a pleasant place for us to inhabit, but chiefly because it means union for ever with God.

In like manner we should not desire perfection in virtue and holiness merely that we may be perfect, exalted and better than others, but in order to please God, to do his will and to unite ourselves to him.

So also we should not desire a high place in heaven and great riches there merely for our own sake, that we may be exalted above others, but we should desire them intensely because they mean that we shall know God better and love him more for all eternity, and because our Lord has said: *Heap up treasures in heaven.*

In fact, so disinterested should even our desire of heaven be that, if only, by God's mercy, we can attain to that degree of glory it is his will we should reach, we should earnestly desire all others to be higher than we ourselves, in order to give more glory to God, if such were his adorable will. If, then, any sentence of Blosius or Tauler seems to favour any error of the Quietists, we must understand it in the orthodox Catholic sense. If anyone had asked Blosius whether he held any of the condemned propositions of Molinos, his repudiation of them would have been conveyed in words very plain and emphatic.

The edition from which this translation has been made is one printed *Ex typographia Ducalis Monasterii Campidonensis,* A.D. 1672. This is probably the printing-press of the Benedictine Abbey at Kempten, in South Bavaria. It is a town on the River Iller, about sixty miles south-west of Munich. The

abbot ranked in former times as one of the princes of the Empire.

This edition seems to be a reprint of the edition of 1632, brought out by the monks of the Abbey of Liessies, and printed in Antwerp at the Plantin Press, while Antony de Winghe was abbot.

This appears to be the case, because the frontispiece represents a Benedictine abbot, presumably Blosius, kneeling before our Lady, while allegorical figures are holding out before him an open book, on which is printed: *Venerabilis Patris D. Ludovici Blosii, Monasterii Lætiensis, ordinis S Benedicti, in Hannonia Abbatis, opera, cura et studio R. D. Antonii De Winghe, Abbatis, et Monachorum ejusdem Monasterii aucta, ornata, illustrata.*

The monks of Kempten state that they had obtained permission of the Abbot of Liessies to use the introduction and notes of the Antwerp edition in their edition of 1672.

From this introduction we gather that while the divisions into chapters and the headings of the chapters are the work of Blosius himself, the analytical summaries which so greatly facilitate the reading of the work were made not by Blosius but by his editors.

Some notes have been added in this trans-

lation; and to make it clear that they are not the work of the editors of the 1632 edition, the word " Translator " is appended to them.

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FROM THE LETTER OF BLOSIUS

ABBOT OF LIESSIES, TO FLORENTIUS A MONTE, SENDING HIM THE BOOK OF SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTION

LUDOVICUS BLOSIUS

TO

FLORENTIUS A MONTE,

A MAN OF REMARKABLE PIETY,

SENDETH GREETING

1. At last I send to thee, O Florentius, beloved in Christ, this Book of Spiritual Instruction, written for my own use and in an unpolished and inelegant style. I know thou hast been expecting it for a long time. At the end I have added an appendix, the doctrine of which is taken from Tauler and other fathers. Lastly, I have written out an exercise of aspirations which I felt sure would afford thee pleasure. Thou seest that I can refuse nothing to thy charity.

* * * * *

The Usefulness of Spiritual Reading

20. A rumour that reached us here, to the effect that the number of heretics is daily

increasing, drove me to dwell at some length on these matters, and I find I have launched out as if all the Christian people were listening! I do not intend after this to write or publish anything more, for I ought to prepare myself for a holy death. The world is already full of books!

But I rejoice very much that thou hast not a mind to read anything except holy books. The books of Blessed Trutha, or Gertrude the virgin, published under the title of *Insinuationes divinæ Pietatis,* or *Thoughts Suggestive of Divine Love,* are justly praised by you; for in truth they contain an immense treasure. Proud men and sensual men, who *perceive not and do not understand those things that are of the Spirit of God,** condemn these most holy books, and say that revelations of this sort are only the dreams of women. For they know not with what familiarity God joins himself to a soul that is humble, clean, loving and free from all impediments. They know not that a mind which is enlightened by God in an excellent way, and is intimately united to him, learns the truth without any error. Even if we could not drove by other arguments the certainty and firmness of the Catholic faith except from the books of those blessed virgins, Gertrude,

* 1 Cor. ii 14.

Mechtilde, Hildegarde, Elizabeth Stœglin,* and of Bridget the widow, what they have written ought to make the heretics exceedingly ashamed. To these virgins God has manifested his secrets, and as, according to the prophecy of Joel, *He has poured out his Spirit upon them,*† they have seen wonderful visions. These critics may gnaw in their caves, as much as they like, the dry husks of their errors; never will they grow fat with the grace of God until they enter into the grand house of God, that is the Catholic Church. It is certainly possible that men of this kind may sometimes feel a certain sweetness and light in their heart and senses, and thus touched may shed many tears, but, notwithstanding, God holdeth them in detestation. For the angel of darkness *transforms himself into an angel of light,*‡ fills the souls of vain and proud men with sweetness and false consolation, and wraps them up with a kind of false light, like sackcloth, all of which hardens them in pride and error.

21. But do thou, in order to be truly enlightened by God, and to be nourished by his grace and to grow more and more in humility and other virtues, take care to read with will-

* First abbess of the Convent of Mount St Rupert at Bingen on the Rhine.—TRANSLATOR.

† Joel ii 28. ‡ 2 Cor. xi 14.

ing mind, not only the canonical Scriptures, which are of all the most worthy of study, but also the holy writings of the fathers and others that agree with the inspired word: for instance, the books of St Gertrude, so rightly praised by thee.

Holy reading brings the greatest help to a man, though true internal prayer is always to be preferred to reading. Moreover, I would have thee remember that no prayer is better than the Lord's Prayer and the Angelical Salutation, the Our Father and Hail Mary. All other holy forms of prayer value as good pearls, but the Lord's Prayer and the Angelical Salutation hold thou in higher estimation as most precious and incomparable means of union.

Blessed is the man who cleaveth to the highest good with unshaken tenacity of intention, for his whole life becomes nothing less than a continual and most pure prayer. For true prayer consists in lifting the mind to God, even if no words are employed.

But, alas, how negligent and slothful we are! Rivers of water should run down from our eyes at the sight of this misery. We ought indeed to lament that so few nowadays care to turn themselves completely to that most joyful good, which is God, and so few really desire in their hearts to be joined and

united to him. In former times the number was far greater.

Rare indeed is it, in this our age, to find a man who really desireth to deny himself and to follow Christ with true humility, genuine mortification and resignation. For nearly all are devoted to curiosity and the pleasures of the senses; they love vanity, they desire their own advancement, they follow their own will and the vicious inclinations of nature. On this account they turn themselves away with a certain despair from what they may read or hear of a perfect life, persuading themselves that it is utterly impossible they could ever attain to it. And yet the kind God is ever most ready to help any one of us and to bring us to that perfection, if only we do what we can.

23. For illumination and afterwards divine union follow true mortification. The plain fact is that what keeps us back is our enervating spiritual languor. If once, with a truly manful heart, we were to conquer ourselves bravely, and, dying to all passing things, we were to strive to prepare for God a pleasing dwelling-place in our souls, we could not fail at length to obtain very great things, we could not fail to possess God within us and to feel his presence.

24. For this reason a certain father has

said: "If only, O man, thou hast in thy heart the flame of a true desire to arrive at an excellently holy life; if only, in order to obtain it, thou continuest to pray and labour, be certain that, because of humble self-denial and persevering prayer, thou wilt obtain perfection itself before death if only it is good for thy salvation. And even if thou dost not arrive at it before thou art called hence, without doubt thou wilt find it in God in eternity. Never cease thine efforts, therefore; never faint with fatigue, although thou dost not at once, as thou wouldst wish, attain to that which thou dost desire."

May the Lord Jesus, by his powerful grace, deign to arouse us all to seek him only with pure love.

Farewell, my Florentius, and remember me in thy prayers.

Liessies,* the Ides of September, 1551.

* Liessies was in the province of Hainault in Belgium. That portion of Hainault was annexed by France in 1678, and now forms part of the department of Nord, but at the time of Blosius was included in the dominions of Charles V. Liessies was an ancient Benedictine abbey dating from the eleventh century.—TRANSLATOR.

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A BOOK OF SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTION

INTRODUCTION

EXPLAINING CERTAIN TERMS USED IN MYSTICAL THEOLOGY

1. The one rational soul may be considered in three ways, and is therefore called by three names.
2. It is called *Anima*, soul, if it is considered as to its exterior and interior senses, and sensitive appetite or desire.
3. It is called *Spiritus*, spirit, if it is considered in its rational powers: memory, intellect and will.
4. It is called *Mens*, mind, or the apex of the mind, if looked at in its essence, as the image of God and turned to him.
5. Often, however, the different names are used indiscriminately.
6. The expression "interior man" denotes the rational power of the soul and its essence. "Exterior man" means the soul looked at in its animal and sensitive power.
7. Understanding is threefold, and love is also threefold—namely, sensual, rational and mystical or ecstatic, which last is also called supereminent or superessential.
8. In animal power men are like the lower animals. In the higher powers men are like the angels.
9. The reason is called lower or inferior when it attends to temporal things; higher or superior when it is occupied by eternal things.

1. As many lovers of piety desire that I should publish this little book, which I wrote for my own use, it will be a help to beginners in the spiritual life if I say a few words by way of preface concerning the soul and its powers.

All should be aware, therefore, that the rational soul, which in itself is indivisible, is divided by holy writers into three parts. The lowest retains the name of "soul," the middle part is called "spirit," the highest is usually termed the "mind," or "the apex or highest point of the spirit."

2. To the lowest of these parts belong the inferior and sensitive powers which we possess in common with brute beasts. These inferior powers are of two kinds.

(*a*) Five exterior powers, commonly called the five senses—namely, sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. These five are called "particular senses," flowing from that sense which is called "common," the seat of which is in the brain.

(*b*) The power of appetite, which is considered to have its seat in the heart. This force of appetite is divided into the appetite of desire and what is termed the "irascible" appetite.* From these two arise other

* The irascible part of the soul does not mean simply the passion of anger, though that is included, but hatred, aversion and the energy to surmount obstacles, etc.—TRANSLATOR.

affections and natural passions—for instance, desire, indignation, joy, sorrow, love, hatred, fear, etc.

3. To the middle part, termed the spirit, belong three higher powers, rational and intellectual, which we possess in common with the angels—namely, intellect, also called intelligence, memory and will. These three grand powers are the spiritual senses of the soul; for internal sight is attributed to the intellect, hearing to the force of memory, while spiritual and internal smell, taste and touch are attributed to the force of affection or love—that is, to the will. The higher as well as the lower powers of the soul have been miserably weakened, corrupted and disordered by sin, but are restored to their lost rank and dignity by our Lord Jesus Christ.

4. The third and highest part of the soul, called the mind or the apex—that is, the highest summit of the spirit—is the simple and God-like basis or groundwork of the soul—that is, the simple essence of the soul sealed with the image of God. When considered in relation to this spiritual basis of the soul, life is called superessential,* through which both the spiritual and active

* Superessential means above the nature or constitution of a thing.—TRANSLATOR.

life are perfected. From the mind itself the three higher powers flow, and re-flow again into it, as rays of light emanate from the sun. Here, in truth, the likeness of God shines out in a wonderful way. For as the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost are three Persons, but one God, so the memory, intellect and will are three powers, but one mind. And just as the three Persons of God work together in inseparable union, so do those three powers of the mind. The memory recalls nothing without the intellect and the will; the intellect does not understand or know anything without the memory and the will; and the will desires nothing without the intellect and the memory.

5. One consequence of this union is that the term "mind" is often used to denote the higher powers as well as the essential basis of the soul. Also, the term "spirit" is often employed when the basis of the soul is meant, as well as its powers—as, for instance, when it is said that man is composed of spirit, soul and body. In this phraseology the human soul is divided only into two parts. Frequently, also, by the term "spirit" the whole soul is meant.

6. When the Holy Scripture speaks of the "interior" and "exterior" man, by the term "interior" is often meant the basis

of the soul with its superior powers, while by the term "exterior" is understood the body with the lower and animal powers, which are united to the body, as far as their operation is concerned.

7. According to this threefold division of the soul man is able to know and desire in three different ways.

(*a*) There is, in the first place, knowledge according to the senses, to which correspond the sensitive appetite, affection and love.

(*b*) In the second place there is knowledge according to reason and intellect, to which answers rational and intellectual appetite, affection and love.

(*c*) Thirdly, there is knowledge proper to the highest point of the intellect—that is, according to simple intelligence—to which corresponds supreme affection and a love in the highest point of the will, which is called ecstatical. It is called ecstatical because by it a man is carried by God's help above his natural powers, and enters into the inward sanctuary of his own soul and intimate union with God, going out into God himself. Then, indeed, love enters into the divine nuptial chamber, the intellect remaining without.

8. Beasts possess knowledge only according to sense; they have also only sensitive appetite —that is, concupiscence and anger. They

have memory according to sense, because those things which they perceive by sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch, they are able to remember and imagine; but man is gifted also with an intellectual memory. Brute beasts have not a will, but only something resembling will. For, as they do not possess reason and free-will, they are unable freely to will and not to will, they cannot resist the motions of sensuality, but are obliged to follow them.

On the other hand, man, endowed with reason and free-will, is not compelled to serve his sensual appetite. In him, therefore, the higher appetite, guided by reason, ought to govern, and the lower and sensitive appetite to submit and obey. Of men who live according to sensuality, and not according to reason, which has been joined to sensuality, the Psalmist thus speaks: *Man, when he was in honour, did not understand; he is compared unto senseless beasts, and is become like unto them.**

9. When reason is occupied about human and temporal things, it is called "lower reason," but "higher reason" when it is intent on eternal and divine things.

I hope that beginners in spiritual ways will find profit in these things, though written by me in a commonplace and unpolished style.

* Ps. xlviii 13.

CHAPTER I

ALL MEN OUGHT PROPERLY TO ASPIRE AFTER PERFECTION AND UNION WITH GOD. HOW THAT PERFECTION MAY BE ATTAINED

1. The soul united to God by love needs not the comfort of anything created.
2. For in God only is the fulness of delight. All else is lower than the soul, and cannot satisfy it.
3. The soul united to God is more wonderfully enlightened and inflamed by God with the light of truth than by the rules of any human master.
4. A soul in this state is most useful to God's Church.
5. To such a soul God is always present, even in the midst of external occupations.
6. The short way to attain to this union is the use of self-denial, introversion and aspirations.

1. As God, and none save God, the highest and unchangeable good, is able to satisfy and quiet the desires of a rational soul, every man ought, according to right reason, to aim with ardour the most earnest after this end—namely, that by attaining to a perfect life, he may be intimately united to God himself in this exile. For if man attained to this union he would truly find, by intimate experience within his own soul, him who by his joyful presence would make all want to vanish clean away, would enrich him with treasures the most solid in value, and would fill him with unspeakable joy. From that moment would

man be unable to wander forth in search of spurious delight derived from created things, for all to him would be insipid and bitter which was not God.

2. In fact, the rational spirit is so noble that no perishable good is able to satisfy its cravings. For it cannot be filled and made perfectly happy by those things which are below itself; but the sky, the earth, the sea and all things visible and sensible are below the rational soul. Therefore, only with its maker, God, can it be content and happy, for he is incomparably better and more worthy than itself. As a wanderer that can find no rest, and a poor famished beggar without food, so is man until he perfectly embraces with the arms of charity him the immensity of whose dignity makes it impossible not to desire him. With whatever riches, delights and honours he may abound, he cannot be truly satisfied unless he possesses God by the contact of love. But when once he has found God in the highest part of his being —namely, in his mind or inmost soul—he willingly bids adieu to all created things, and sings with the Psalmist: *It is good for me to hold fast unto my God.** With holy Job he says: *I will die in my nest, and as a palm tree I shall multiply my days.*† He now needs

* Ps. lxxii 28. † Job xxix 18.

no exterior comfort, for he is inwardly joined to him who is the torrent and ocean of inestimable delights, and the overflowing fulness of all things that are beautiful, pleasant, sweet, excellent and desirable, and that are able to please the heart of man.

3. When the spirit of man attains to the wisdom of mystical theology—that is, to divine union—he is already illuminated with the light of eternal truth; his faith is rendered firm, his hope is strengthened, and his charity is inflamed. Wherefore, if all the wise men of the world were to say to a man experienced in mystical union, "You are miserably deceived; your faith is not true," he would answer at once: "Nay, you are all deceived, for my faith is most true and absolutely certain." Thus he would reply with the utmost confidence, having in his heart an infallible foundation, not so much through the investigation of reason as by the union of love. For such a man knows the Godhead better than many learned masters of theology who have never been admitted into the Holy of holies and the secret chamber of the eternal King, and have never been illuminated in any extraordinary way with the light of grace. God unfolds to him the secret power of the divine Scriptures, and gives him the knowledge of the savour of the Gospels. He,

therefore, drawing true wisdom rather from the influence of the Holy Ghost than from the reading of many books, understands clearly what should be done and what left undone by himself and others.

4. Those, indeed, who are united to God without any medium, and allow him freely to work in them, are the most dear friends of God, and in one little hour are of more advantage to the Church than others who have not attained to this union can be in many years. These intimate friends and children of God rejoice with a happy and peaceful liberty of mind, raised above cares, above all disturbance, above the fear of death, purgatory, hell and of all things that can happen to the soul in time and in eternity.

5. Neither the society of men nor external occupations take from these the presence of God, because in the midst of every kind of multiplicity—that is, of various duties—they know how to preserve the unity of the spirit, being gifted with the constant power of dwelling with God in the inner sanctuary of the soul. All things that they see and hear give them an immediate impulse towards God, and for them all things are, in a kind of way, turned into God, if it is right to say so, for in all things they seek nothing, in intention and love, save God himself. To take an

example from ordinary life: we know that those who gaze for a time intently on the sun see afterwards a representation of the globe of the sun on every object to which they turn their dazzled eyes. Likewise these souls, since they are constantly occupied within themselves with the things of God and constantly cleave closely to God, remain, in their outward life, blind, although they see; deaf, although they hear; and dumb, although they speak. They lead, in fact, a supernatural and angelical life on earth, and on this account may rightly be called earthly angels.

6. Now, whoever aspires to this state, and desires to become perfect and to experience the close embrace of divine union, must strenuously persevere in self-denial and mortification of himself; he must, moreover, diligently cultivate the habit of holy "introversion" or recollection, and must ardently aspire to God by prayers of ejaculation and by holy desires. He must, moreover, take care that all he does or leaves undone should be done or left undone for God's sake, looking in all things to him and seeking to please him only. In this way, and in no other, can a man come to perfection and to mystical union with God. Of these things I propose to treat shortly, as God gives me light.

CHAPTER II

OF ENTIRE SELF-DENIAL AND MORTIFICATION AND TRUE REFORMATION OF LIFE, WHICH IS THE FIRST MEANS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO AIM AT UNION WITH GOD

SECTION I

DENIAL OF SELF-WILL IN GENERAL

1. The soul must cleave to no created thing and to no person, however holy, inordinately, or with persistent affection as to its own property and possession (*cum pertinaci proprietate*).
2. In all things the will of God must be put in place of self-will, and embraced instead of our own.
3. The soul must be ready to give up willingly all delight that may flow from spiritual exercises.

1. THE spiritual man must learn to leave himself and all other things for the love of God. He must possess nothing with any tenacious affection of heart. He must hold fast to no visible and perishable thing, to no passing and created object. He must not seek the friendship, familiar intercourse or presence of anyone, however holy, for any mere natural gratification. He must remember that not only bad things, but even those that are good, may become hindrances if they are loved or sought inordinately,* just

* "Inordinate" means "not in proper order." Nothing, in proper order, should be loved for its own

as plates of gold held before the eyes prevent sight as effectually as plates of iron.

2. He must wholly banish self-love from his heart. He must in everything give up his own self-will, resigning it to God, wholly pouring it forth into God and making it perfectly one with God's will. Never, either in words or in his own heart, must he say these words: "I will this, I do not will that: I choose this, I reject that," with a view to himself and his own advantage. Neither in time nor in eternity must he seek anything as his own; but, looking upon nothing as his own peculiar property, he must utterly strip himself of all things, and deprive himself of everything, and die to himself and all things else as though he had never been created. In everything he must seek God and his honour and will, so that to his very prayers and pious desires he must join a humble self-denial and resignation of himself, desiring that not his own, but God's will should be done. All things that happen to him he must refer to the divine will, and take them just as they are from the hand of the Lord, without whose providence not even a single leaf falls to the ground from the trees. In prosperity as well as adversity, in losses, injuries, calum-

sake merely, but for God. God should always be first, and be the real end.—TRANSLATOR.

nies, reproaches, scornful insults or contempt, in pains of body and anxiety and heaviness of heart, in grief and in interior desolation and woe—in fact, in every kind of affliction he must not only bear patiently and quietly with what God permits or commands, but he must also praise God,* believing that he both can and will advance his salvation by all these things.

3. Delights both of spirit and nature he must renounce. When he perceives consolation and interior sweetness coming from God he must take heed not to abuse it as a means of pleasure, seeking himself and his own gratification in it, for this would gravely offend his heavenly Spouse; but he must receive it with humility of soul, and he must remain as free, detached and disentangled as if he did not feel it. Since, indeed, our corrupt nature is wont to fall back in all things on itself, and to seek self, even in the gifts of God, the servant of God must not desire spiritual sweetness immoderately,† nor must

* In all things he should say, not merely, "May God's will be done," but "I thank thee, O God, for doing thy own will in thy own way, because it is thy will."—TRANSLATOR.

† Note that Blosius only warns us not to desire spiritual sweetness *immoderately*. In a moderate way, resigned to God's will, we may desire it, as it helps much in the service of God; and what we may desire that we may pray to obtain.—TRANSLATOR.

he rely upon it. He should be no less ready to be without it than to have it. For in God only should he rest, and not in his gifts.

He should acknowledge that he is completely unworthy of any gifts from God. None of them should he make use of, or lay claim to, as his own, but he should leave them all to him to whom they belong. He should pour back all wholly into God, glorifying him, giving him thanks and offering his own gifts to him for his eternal praise. The servant of God must take heed that he does not vainly desire to receive any divine revelations; and if it should please God to reveal anything to him, he must not on that account imagine himself more holy. Gifts which he may have received from God he must take care not to talk about imprudently and indiscriminately to other men without God's internal permission.

SECTION II

MORTIFICATION OF THE SENSES AND THE TONGUE

1. The senses must be used, not according to natural inclination, but in the way the soul sees would be better pleasing to God.
2. The refreshment of food and drink, and the pleasure arising from them, must be taken with praise of God and with sober moderation.
3. Unusual austerity of life should not be sought after, but discretion is to be chiefly valued.
4. Discipline of the tongue and of speech.

1. THE servant of God must keep an exceedingly careful watch over his senses. As far as possible he must take care not to use any of his senses for mere self-gratification—that is, not to look at, hear, smell, taste, say or touch anything merely for the pleasure of doing so; and when he has slightly offended in such things, he must severely reprove himself. He must not desire to see, hear, smell, taste, speak or touch more or otherwise than God interiorly permits. For if he seeks delight in creatures, he will not be able to find true delight in God.

2. Therefore, in refreshing the body with food, drink or sleep, he must not consider pleasure, but the support of nature. He should take every morsel of food and every draught of drink with moderation and self-restraint, for the glory of God; and while thus refreshing nature, he should, with a certain holy fear, remember the law of self-denial. Never should he swallow much drink at one draught, but if his thirst is very great rather let him drink oftener. It would be advisable that at dinner, in the middle of the day, he should refresh his body with nourishment as far as the necessity of nature requires; but at supper he should eat sparingly, for quiet sleep generally follows a moderate supper. And although he should feel some earthly

gratification in eating and drinking, he should not admit it into his soul, nor should he cleave unto it. It would be a fault to seek for choice and dainty food, and when such things are laid before him he should often leave them untouched, for our Lord Jesus had gall and vinegar given him to drink. He should prefer to have simple rather than costly things provided for his use, and, so far from desiring what is superfluous, he should choose poverty rather than abundance.

3. But, on the other hand, let him beware of adopting rashly unusual austerity of life, although he may know that many saints have led a very rigid life. For they, fully enlightened by the Holy Spirit, knew that it would please God that they should so live. It has happened to many that, following indiscreetly the fervour they felt at the beginning of their conversion, they have overburdened their nature in the way of external austerities, and have thus rendered themselves unfit to apply interiorly to God. It is quite true that haircloth, a hard bed, fasting on bread and water, the discipline and suchlike things, done purely for the honour of God, do please our Lord, and help not a little to tame the flesh, especially in robust youth; but the true love of God unites a man far

more closely to God and far more speedily and efficaciously restrains and overcomes the wantonness of the flesh. God is wont, in the most suitable way possible, to train and burden those who resign themselves entirely to him, and are ready to receive every adversity humbly from his hands, and to bear them patiently as long as he pleases. Therefore should the servant of God take heed not to overload his body with too much abstinence, too long watches and excessive austerities undertaken by his own will; while, on the other hand, he must be on his guard not to treat nature delicately, but must follow the moderate law of holy discretion in all things and guide himself by the wise advice of others.

4. If anyone should seek counsel of him, he should first acknowledge in his own heart that of himself he cannot answer anything aright, and turning to God he should thus pray in his own mind, " O Lord God, who art within me, deign to speak through me what will please thee and what will best suit thy honour and the salvation of souls," and then he should say what has to be said humbly, guardedly and wisely. If he succeed in saying anything well, he should attribute it to God; if he speak badly, let him ascribe it to himself. He should always avoid unseason-

able* bitterness of words. In his speech he should seek truth, and should avoid all false show or flattery. He should not be eager to speak of matters that bring blame upon others. On the other hand, in praising anyone he should remember to be moderate, lest he should fall into the disgraceful fault of flattery.

He must take care not to detract anyone and never to give a willing ear to those who indulge in detraction. He should strive not to hear words of detraction and other hurtful things, and he should try prudently to interrupt such things and to cut them short, after the example of a certain man who, whenever he heard others speaking badly of someone else, used to say: "We ought to thank God if we do not commit the same faults." The servant of God should diligently restrain his tongue from idle and vain words. He should not easily allow himself to discuss high things, and if it is necessary or useful to speak of such things, he must be careful to preserve interior and exterior humility. He should not love much speaking, for it is a great impediment to an interior and spiritual life; but, on the other hand, he should be greatly given to a moderate silence, which is the mother of

* The Latin is *intempestivam asperitatem*, untimely, unseasonable, inopportune or unnecessary bitterness or sharpness of speech.—TRANSLATOR.

much good. Every unbridled, inconsiderate and hasty word he should mortify. Oh, how happy is he who knows how to restrain his tongue, for he delivers his soul from numberless faults and anxieties !

SECTION III

ORDINARY RULES FOR MAKING OUR ACTIONS INTERIOR IN THEIR SPIRIT

1. Nothing whatever should be done or left undone without leave being first asked of God.
2. Occasions of sin should be avoided by means of silence, solitude and constant occupation.
3. Gravity of exterior comportment.
4. In all things Christ should be held up before the mind's eye as the model.
5. A strong bridle must be put on concupiscence and all passions.

1. THE servant of God should keep a diligent watch over all his actions, interior as well as exterior, being always careful to maintain purity of heart. He should neither speak, desire nor do anything with inordinate affection or interior entanglement, but should strive to preserve everywhere calmness and liberty of mind. In all doubtful matters he should seek counsel and leave from the Lord and sometimes also from some spiritual man. His one endeavour should always be to get to know the most gracious will of God, saying

within himself: "O Lord, what dost thou will me to do now? Will it please thee if I do this or that?" For the Lord himself speaks through interior inspiration to a man's soul, saying: "Do this; leave that undone." When, therefore, the servant of God feels that God wills or permits him to do anything, he should speak in this way: "Lord, deign to do that in me and through me." But if he perceives that this particular thing does not please the Lord, he should immediately deny himself, and dying to himself, he should leave the thing undone, however small it may seem, as, for instance, to look once at some object or to say some little joking word.

2. He must prudently escape occasions of faults, and what greatly helps to secure this is to love solitude and to cultivate it as far as circumstances will allow. For if a servant of God takes delight in unnecessary intercourse with men; if he is intolerant of silence; if, without restraint, he desires to see this or that; if he eagerly inquires what is said or done and willingly listens to idle reports and news,* it is useless for him to propose to himself to rise to even the lowest degree of a

* By taking a newspaper we pay for news of every kind to be brought to us with daily regularity. Blosius lived before the epoch of the daily paper.—TRANSLATOR.

more holy life. He must retire apart, therefore, and keep silence, in order to be able to progress in true virtue and to have an opportunity to apply his soul to divine things. When, however, charity or any other reasonable cause exists, he may converse humbly with men, showing them a courteous kindness without excess, and *keeping peace with all men as far as is possible.** Slothful idleness he must always fly from as a most pestiferous poison, and he must strive to spend all his time fruitfully for the honour of God.

3. He should abstain from all immoderate rejoicing, laughter, useless jokes, in fact from all levity of behaviour. In external actions he should act in a quiet way: in countenance he should be calm, in look modest, in his gait grave, desiring to please God, not the world.

4. Christ Jesus he should ever consider as the living model of virtue; he should endeavour to imitate him, most diligently conforming his own life exactly to the life of Christ.

5. Pride, vainglory, self-complacency, desire of human favour and honour, motions of impatience, impulses of anger, the concupiscence of the flesh, the sting of lust, and in a word, all depraved passions and affections, with the powerful aid of the grace of God, he must diligently destroy and kill.

* Rom. xii 14, 18.

SECTION IV

INTERCOURSE WITH OTHERS

1. Mortify the judgement, rather yielding to others than disputing.
2. Those who cause us annoyance should be forgiven, and the vexation received as coming from God for our merit.
3. We should love, compassionate, and, when necessary, correct others. We must turn away from no one since all are members of Christ, the Head.
4. Despise no sinner, however great; judge no one rashly.
5. In social life with others acts of genuine humility should often be performed.

1. THE servant of God should not be obstinate in his own opinion and his own judgement. He must take heed not to contradict anyone pertinaciously, unless indeed truth or justice compels him to contradict, nor should he wrangle and dispute about trifles. Let him easily yield to others and promptly comply with them in those things that are lawful, preferring the will of another to his own. He should allow himself to be reprehended or taught by anyone whatever. Willingly should he accuse himself, willingly should he acknowledge a fault, while he should show himself anxious to amend his defects.

2. He should immediately pardon and forgive an injury, and should show himself

a kind friend to the one who has injured him. Never should he consider anyone as unjustly troublesome to him, but in every trial he should bear in mind his own sins and his ingratitude to God, and so convince himself that he deserves trials more grievous than any he endures, and that, if he had his deserts, all creatures would afflict him and trample him under foot as the dirt of the road. He should turn the eyes of his soul from those who afflict him to God, who allows him to be aifflicted, and bear his trial with a meek and humble heart, considering that it comes only from the hand of the Lord. For when the knife cuts, it is not the knife, but the hand of the surgeon directing it that should be considered.

3. All men, without any exception whatever, he must sincerely love from his heart, as himself; that is, he must love them spiritually and in proper order, desiring for them the grace of God and everlasting happiness. And that he may find it easier truly to love others, he should look upon every man as himself, because capable of divine union.* He should look upon all as brothers and sisters, called to the same happiness as him-

* Because the effect of grace is to make us all members of one body, Christ being the Head.—TRANSLATOR.

self. He should consider in them, not the usefulness of their external persons, but the nobility and beauty of their invisible souls, made after the image of God. He should sympathize with all who are in necessity, trial or misfortune. He should be ready to benefit, help and console all, without exception, but particularly those who are opposed to him and persecute him. He must treat the imperfections of others with kind and merciful forbearance, healing and correcting any little bitterness he may feel in his heart with the sweetness of holy charity. But, on the other hand, sins which he ought to correct and reprove he should not feign not to see, but the correction and reproof should be mingled with mildness and a suitable gentleness. Sin must be hated in a man, but not the man on account of the sin: for God made the man, but man, not God, did the sin. Vainly will a man flatter himself that he has God's grace if he should hate anyone, and vainly, too, would a man esteem himself to be one of God's special friends so long as there is anyone he loves less sincerely and from whom he turns his mind with displeasure and bitterness. Therefore must the servant of God embrace everyone with the sweet arms of charity. He should grieve over the faults of others, and rejoice at their virtues, giving

thanks to God; and this he cannot but do if he looks upon everyone, as said above, as himself. For since the whole Church is one mystical body, of which Christ is the Head and we the members, each member, if he be joined to the body by true charity, ought to grieve if another member is ill, and rejoice with anyone in health.*

4. The servant of God should condemn no one and despise no one; neither should he despair of the conversion of any sinner, as he who is now the worst may be changed by the grace of God and become the best, seeing that the bridge of divine mercy, by which he can pass over to a holy life, is not yet broken down.

The sayings and doings of others who are not under his charge the servant of God should not discuss or judge; but, humbly commending all to God, he should remain calmly retired within himself. He must be careful, I repeat, not to despise a man whom he may see acting wrongly and sinning, but he should pray for the sinner, begging God to help and preserve him. He should get into the habit of interpreting everything he sees or hears in as good a sense as possible. If some rash judgement or bad suspicion or contempt of another should obtrude itself

* *Cf.* 1 Cor. xii 12, 26, 27.

unbidden into his mind, he should remember that, if such things are wilfully consented to, they will wholly impede the grace of the Holy Spirit. What, then, should he do when he detects them in his mind? He should immediately prostrate himself in spirit, and, acknowledging his fault before our Lord, he should say these or similar words: "O Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner. I kiss the footprints of this thy servant; I prefer him to myself, and I offer myself to be trodden underfoot by him and all other men, acknowledging myself to be unworthy to remain on the earth."

5. In this way should he always prefer everyone to himself.* He should consider himself to be the most vile and unworthy of all, and he should desire to be thus considered by others. He should acknowledge that if the most wicked criminals had received as much grace from God as he has, they would live far better than he does. Therefore he must not desire to have any name or reputation to be praised or to be considered humble or holy. He should prefer to lie hidden rather than to be known, to be subject rather than to be in authority, to be taught rather than to teach others. The lowest place should satisfy him. He should not be ashamed of outward

* *Cf.* Phil. ii 3.

humiliation, neither ought he in his own mind to make much of his own exercises, preferring them to those of others. The more he may feel himself to have advanced, the greater the gifts he has received from God, so much the more lowly and despicable should he become in his own eyes. For, if he considers himself to be something, he is still a very long way off from God. Let him always, therefore, think and acknowledge that of himself he is nothing, and can do nothing. For every creature, since it was made from nothing, of its own nature is nothing; but man, furthermore, by sin has reduced himself to nothing. Moreover, since he has been created, compared to the Creator he is nothing. Therefore, the servant of God, considering the abyss of his own nothingness, and plunging himself into it, must dwell in the deepest valley of humility. He should say to God: "O Lord God, I am poor and weak; I am nothing, I can do nothing; have mercy on me." On this holy thought and consideration of his own nothingness all the safety of man depends.

SECTION V

SELF-DENIAL IS BOTH USEFUL AND EASY TO A MAN OF GOODWILL

1. Self-denial and resignation to the good pleasure of God is the short way to all perfection.
2. We must rise speedily after any fall in the exercise of self-denial, with hatred of the fault, hope of pardon and resolution of amendment.
3. The art of self-denial is at first difficult, but constant practice maketh it easy and pleasant.

1. In good truth, without being earnest in constant and diligent self-denial and mortification, whatever else a man may do, he will never progress.

For the seed can never spring up into the comely stalk and ear *unless it first die.** Hence it has been said by a friend of God: "The truest rule of all perfection is this: Be humble, and wherever you find yourself, leave yourself." And again: "True resignation, with profound humility, is the shortest way to God." In genuine and entire mortification lies hid true and most joyful life. By far the most excellent exercise is to have a mind always dying to things created, and to keep down and humble oneself below every creature. For he who always dies to himself is always beginning a new life in God. The resigned and mortified soul is like a bunch

* John xii 25.

of grapes, ripe, soft and sweet; but an unresigned soul is like a cluster unripe, hard and sour. No more pleasing offering can be made to God than the resignation of our own will, because nothing is more dear to man than his own will and his own freedom.

When a man, for God's sake, fights against and mortifies the indulgence of his own senses and his own self-will, even in the least things, he does a thing more pleasing to God than if he were to recall many dead men to life. Suppose that two men, walking the same way, both noticed a beautiful little flower; if one, though feeling inclined to pick it, should reflect within himself, and say, " I will leave it for God's sake," while the other, without thinking at all about the matter, simply followed his inclination and gathered it; though it is quite true that the one who picked it committed no sin, yet the other who left the flower for God's sake would obtain as much more merit as heaven is raised above earth. Now if, for so small a mortification, God will give so great a recompense, how immense will be that reward which he will bestow on those who despise and relinquish all things, themselves included, for his sake! The servant of God should, then, frequently say within himself: " For thy sake, O Lord, I desire not to see such a thing, since it is not

necessary that I should see it; for thy sake I will not hear that, or taste that, or say some particular thing, or touch that." He cannot find God perfectly in the secret sanctuary of his soul unless he first puts to death all that is in any way inordinate. Idle gratification of every kind, therefore, must be cut away.

2. When, through want of mortification, he has fallen into some defect, he should groan within himself and sigh in spirit, not, however, with any despondency of mind: no, not even if he should fall into that same defect a hundred or even a thousand times in one day. He must call upon God, and say: "Alas, my Lord God, behold how wicked a sinner am I, in whom vices still live so strongly. How weak am I, and liable to fall. I imagined that all self-indulgence was already dead and buried within me, but, behold, again I feel a fierce rebellion; once more I have been wounded, once more I have offended. But I do not despair of thy mercy, nor, by thy grace, will I ever despair. Have mercy on me, and help me. For the love of thee I am ready again to leave myself and all things, and, behold, I do now leave them." Thus let him pray and then be of good cheer. Let him not imagine that he is not pleasing to God because he is not yet perfect, for he is highly acceptable to God if only from his

heart he desires and with all diligence strives to become more perfect; and happy will he be if, while engaged in such a struggle, he departs this life.

3. This constant mortification in the beginning, indeed, is difficult and troublesome. But if one will only persevere in it manfully for a time, it will afterwards become, by the gift of God, truly easy, yea, delightful. For the art of self-denial, just like any other, if only it be frequently and diligently practised, becomes a second nature by the very succession of repeated acts. This art will be learnt speedily and thoroughly by him who looks upon all things in this world as no more belonging to him than if his body were already dead, often repeating in his mind those words of the Apostle: *You are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.**

When, therefore, a man forsakes his own will in all things and casts away his own private self-love; when he renounces every gratification of spirit and nature; when he restrains inordinate desires; when he acknowledges that he is nothing and the vilest of all; when he promptly obeys God in his own soul and man in outward matters; when he ceases to entangle himself with unnecessary things and superfluous cares; when he allows the

* Col. iii 3.

deeds and words of others to pass as they are, and yields to no rash judgement; when he is unduly moved neither by the praise nor the blame of men; when he bears sweetly and calmly for God's sake any injury, adversity or misery he may encounter within or without; when he indulges in not even a slight and passing complaint; when he entertains a certain common affection of charity for all men, considering them as God's temples—then, without doubt, dead to the world, he lives to God.

CHAPTER III

THE SECOND MEANS TO UNION WITH GOD, WHICH IS "INTROVERSION" AND THE CONSTANT RECALLING OF THE MIND TO HIM.

1. The mind must be diligently recalled from wandering thoughts to God, who is everywhere present.
2. The instability of our minds can be overcome by God's grace and persevering effort.
3. How in all things we can think of God's presence, which is the chief means of introversion.
4. The presence of God everywhere is to be firmly believed, and the intention is to be directed to it in every action.
5. Even in conversation and business, after which the soul must return quickly to fuller introversion.
6. Pure introversion easily follows true and perfect self-denial.
7. The manhood and Godhead of Christ is the second matter of introversion and an easy method of the divine presence.
8. Introversion produces simplicity of soul and detachment of the affections from all created things.
9. Perseverance is necessary that we may obtain it fully.

1. THE servant of God should apply himself to introversion* with unwearying energy.

* *Introversio*, from *intro*, within, and *versus*, turned towards, is a word coined for mystical theology. It means that the mind is turned within, to converse with God dwelling in the soul.—TRANSLATOR.

He must diligently recall his mind from all wanderings and strive to cultivate his spirit by holy thoughts and meditations. For never can he be perfectly joined to God so long as he voluntarily, of set purpose and with pleasure, reflects on vain and idle matters. God not unfrequently allows even perfect men to be annoyed by the importunate inroad of useless and even bad thoughts and imaginations, in order that by resisting them they may be profitably exercised in spiritual warfare. Therefore the servant of God, although he may have to attend to many things, must, so far as possible, be free in the midst of these manifold distractions, and must preserve within his soul unity of spirit. He should conceive an idea of God in his mind as the height of majesty and goodness. He must endeavour everywhere to attend to his lovely presence, as the royal prophet described himself as doing: *I will set the Lord always in my sight.** He ought, I repeat, to consider that God is always present to him in every place, and thus try to direct his interior eyes to him, not indeed with any violent effort, but quietly and simply, stretching forth his spirit lovingly into the Godhead.

2. The servant of God must not lose hope on account of his exceeding instability, which

* Ps. xv 8.

causes him so quickly to sink down and become distracted, but persevering with an unconquered heart in this holy work, he must unceasingly gather up again his scattered spirit and turn it back again into God, his highest good. When once this holy custom has become confirmed within him, he will not find much difficulty in it; and at length, indeed, the habit becomes part of a man's nature, and it is then almost as easy to remain intent on God and divine things as to breathe and live. Further, he must always bear in mind that of his own strength, without the grace of God, he can do nothing. But God will not desert him if with humility he does what he can.

3. Therefore should he " introvert " himself—that is, should turn himself into his own soul, and dwell there in his own heart—for there will he be able to find God. For God, who indeed is everywhere, dwells in the human mind and in the simple basis, or inner sanctuary, of the soul in a very special manner. There he dwells in his own image, and never departs. But happy is he to whom God himself is present, not only by his essence, for thus we know he must be with all his creatures, but also by grace. For God is in the earth, the sea, the air and in all things, essentially, as he said himself by his prophet:

*I fill heaven and earth ;** so that in truth he is nearer to each creature than that creature is to itself. Indeed, if this were not so, no creature could for a moment continue to exist, but would return to its own nothingness; for as it was made from nothing, of itself it is nothing. Whence God is rightly called the Essence of every essence, since his essential presence is the cause of everything continuing to exist. He is wholly in every created thing, whole and undivided in every place. In heaven he manifests his glory, in hell he carries out the law of his justice. By far the most grievous punishment suffered by those who are in hell for ever is that they have God within them, but to him they can never attain. In all things, therefore, God dwells most secretly, and in the basis of the soul itself he remains hidden from all our senses and unknown. Hence Isaias says: *Verily thou art a hidden God.*† Everywhere is he present with all his being, and nevertheless is untouched by any uncleanness; for nothing is filthy in his sight except sin, and by that he is no more defiled than are the bright rays of the sun when they light up the foul recesses of a drain. Although he is thus all in all, he is nevertheless far removed above all.

4. The servant of God, then, must believe

* Jer. xxiii 24. † Isa. xlv 15.

without the slightest doubt that the invisible God is near him, yea, within him. He should stand before his eyes like a chaste spouse, with holy fear, with reverence and humility, saying with Elias the prophet: *The Lord liveth, in whose sight I stand.** Often also should he repeat such words as these within himself: *The Lord is here; the Lord seeth me.*† When he has been much distracted, he may easily bring himself back to the remembrance of God's presence by these or suchlike words. He should so direct himself to God, shutting out the thought of all other things, as if he saw the very being of God before him, and as if there never would be any other being than God and himself. He should shut himself up in God, and dwell in him as in a chamber or a heaven. Greatly should he rejoice and exult that he is so easily able to find God in himself, and that he possesses so wonderful a treasure within his own soul. He finds God in himself now whenever he fills his memory with the thought of his presence, but in a far more excellent way will he experience his presence when he has found out how to penetrate to the inner sanctuary of his own soul.

5. When he is occupied with conversation and business, if he is unable to attend freely

* 3 Kings xvii 1. † 4 Kings iii 14.

to God, he must yet beware of entirely leaving the inner chamber of his heart, thus going away from God himself, but he must continue to breathe out some secret affection to him, so that, directly this outward occupation is over, he may return to himself, and leaving all that is not God, may apply his whole soul to him once more. For he will not be fit to contemplate eternal light unless he can free himself within his own soul from all external things, as if he had never seen them. Happy indeed will he be when neither the society of men nor any other impediment is able to rob him of the sense of God's presence: a thing which will come to pass when his soul is so fastened to God and shut up so securely in him that it always sees him more than any other thing.

6. In fact, the soul that is clothed with true resignation and interior detachment, and appropriates to itself, and uses as its own, none of God's gifts, even if it were daily to be overwhelmed with all the business and occupations of the world, would receive no hurt thereby, if only the weakness of the body were able to bear so heavy a burden. Hence a certain father said: "He who does not cling tenaciously to any external thing, passes through all sensible and temporal things, allowing them to flow on unheeded, and leaves those things alone which do not concern

him, saying to himself: I ought to seek God alone by my intention and love, and bid farewell to all other things, allowing them to pass away unnoticed." A man who never seeks his own satisfaction or convenience, but looks at God through all things, adverse as well as prosperous, in order to tend purely and simply towards God, is able to perform all his outward actions without dissipation, and though occupied with many things, does not lose the unity of his mind, which seeks God alone in all things.* On the contrary, he who does not in all things look purely to God and has not God impressed intimately on his soul is easily rendered distracted and disturbed by places, persons and things. Such a man, wandering far from God, walks with danger, for he is exposed to the shafts of the enemy.

7. The servant of God should place before the eyes of his mind Jesus Christ, the Spouse of his soul—he who clothed the stars with their brightness—hanging on the cross, naked, despised, wounded and afflicted with intense pains. Nor should he think of him as Man only, but as God and Man, the true Light.

* Martha was not reproved for attending to many things, but for being "careful"—*i.e.*, anxious and troubled about many things (Luke x 41).—TRANSLATOR.

Let him conceive, I repeat, a supernatural image of the supersubstantial Lord Jesus. He should adore, praise and glorify him. He should consider and salute his ruddy wounds. He should remember his kindness, sweetness and immense charity.

8. In this way ought he to free himself from all inordinate anxiety, from all vain thoughts, from all imaginations—that is, from forms and likenesses of lower things—and from all entanglement and distraction. In this way should he endeavour to keep his memory like a bridal chamber, clean and neat for the Spouse. For thus he will very much please God, and, at last, the images of created things falling of their own accord from his mind, true interior recollection will be given him.

9. He must by no means abandon his study of perfection and his endeavour to attain it, on account of any natural unsuitableness of his character or on account of the weariness to which he may at first be subject. For those who are learning an art are wont many times to do their work unskilfully and imperfectly, till at last, by long practice, they acquire complete skill, and can do their work with ease. Some, when they see that though they have now laboured for some years, and yet have not obtained what they sought,

become discouraged, and give up their purpose. But they do not act aright; for they who desire some time or other to arrive at the goal of perfection must arm themselves with long-suffering perseverance.*

* The doctrine of this chapter must be compared with that of Chapter V. Blosius does not desire the soul to aim at an imaginative practice of the presence of God, but at one chiefly in the will, conversing with him present by faith in the centre of the soul. This is made abundantly evident by the next chapter.—TRANSLATOR.

CHAPTER IV

ASPIRATION IS THE THIRD MEANS TO ACQUIRE UNION WITH GOD

1. Various kinds of aspirations should be stored up in the mind for use.
2. First, those suited for the purgative way.
3. Secondly, for the illuminative way.
4. Thirdly, for the unitive way.
5. Method of using these different aspirations.

1. In order that the servant of God may be able to practise holy introversion, he should learn and commit to memory certain aspirations, sweet yet burning, which he can dart forth to God, and by which, wherever he may be, and whether he be at rest or actively employed, he may constantly recollect himself in God, and join and unite himself to him; doing so, however, not with immoderate effort, lest he might sink overburdened with the exertion, but gently. Some formulas of such little prayers are here given as specimens.

2. *Aspirations suited to the Purgative Way.*

O Lord God, I, a most vile sinner, am not worthy to live on earth. Alas, I have wandered far from thee, and I dwell in a region far removed from thee and unlike thee. Wretched and blind am I! I am nothing,

I can do nothing without thee. Ah, kind and sweet Jesus, have mercy on me. Wash me with thy precious Blood; cleanse me from all sin; heal me perfectly, that I may please thee.

3. *Aspirations suited to the Illuminative Way.*

Oh, when shall I perfectly die to myself and be free from all creatures? Oh, would that I were truly meek of heart and humble; truly poor and naked in spirit. Grant, O Lord, that by perfect self-denial, perfect mortification of my vices I may arrive at perfect love of thee. Thou hast commanded that I should love thee: give what thou commandest and command what thou pleasest. Grant that I may love thee with my whole heart, my whole mind, with all my powers, with my whole soul. Deign to heal and to reform the powers of my soul, broken and corrupted by sin, by the powers of thy most holy soul. Free my soul from all distracting cares; strip from it the images and forms of perishable things. Grant me to dwell with thee in the sanctuary of my soul; grant that by steadfast thought, clear knowledge and fervent love I may always be able to flow into thee.

4. *Aspirations suited to the Unitive Way.*

O good Jesus. O my hope and my refuge. O beloved, beloved, beloved. O most dear of all loved ones. O my only love. O spouse ever fresh in beauty; spouse sweet as honey. O sweetness of my heart, and life of my soul. O essence of my being, and joyful rest of my spirit. O my much desired consolation, and sincere joy of my soul. O brilliant day of eternity, and serene light of my inmost soul. O bridal chamber, ever shining with heavenly light, and most verdant paradise of rest. Oh, thou art my most beloved beginning; thou art enough for me, O my God. What do I desire but thee? Thou art my true and eternal good. Oh, draw me after thee, that joyfully, purely and perseveringly *I may run in the odour of thy life-giving ointments.**

Prepare for thyself, O my beloved, an acceptable and pleasing dwelling-place in me, that thou mayest come to me and make thine abode with me. Mortify in me and cast out from me whatever is displeasing to thee. Tear me away and separate me from everything that is not thee. Make me a man according to thine own heart; conform me to the image of thy human nature. Wound the very marrow of my heart with the dart of

* Cant. i 3.

thy love. Inebriate my spirit with the wine of perfect charity. Unite me intimately to thyself; transform and change me into thee, that thou mayest be able to find thy delight in me.

Oh, when shall I please thee in all things? When will everything of my own be cut off and extinguished in me? When shall I become wholly thine? When will nothing but thy most gracious will, nothing but thyself live in me? When shall I most ardently love thee? When wilt thou quite burn me up with the flame of thy living fire? When wilt thou completely melt me with thy powerful sweetness? When wilt thou open the door at which I knock? When wilt thou show me thy most beautiful kingdom within me, the which is thou thyself with all thy riches? When wilt thou carry me away, absorb and hide me in thyself? When wilt thou remove all hindrances, and make me one spirit with thyself? When wilt thou destroy every wall standing between us, that I may be inseparably joined to thee? Ah, only love of my heart, deign to do this quickly, for I desire thee, I sigh after thee, I languish with love of thee.

5. The spiritual beginner should revolve in his mind such little prayers as these with pious and holy affection. Often, very likely, one or other of these aspirations will serve

him for a whole exercise; nevertheless, it will be useful on another occasion at leisure, to complete them, at least sometimes, and that in mind only, unless, perchance, he should find it suit him better to pronounce them with his lips. Even the words " O Lord God," alone, if from time to time they are pondered and repeated with a devout heart, may keep a man in the presence of God, or in God, and shut out from his mind wandering imaginations and vain thoughts.

CHAPTER V

ARDENT ASPIRATIONS TO GOD THE QUICKEST WAY TO PERFECTION; THE WISDOM OF MYSTICAL THEOLOGY AND DIVINE UNION; AND HOW PITIABLE IS THE CASE OF THOSE WHO NEGLECT THIS UNION

1. Ardent interior aspirations quickly bring the soul into union with God, which is the perfection of hidden wisdom.
2. Therefore we should lament that many, content with exterior exercises, do not aspire after union, which can most easily be obtained by men even quite unlearned.
3. Interior exercises are far more perfect than exterior; the two should be joined that we may please God more; for he desires to communicate himself to us in the best way.
4. A soul purified from vices is very easily carried into God, who is its centre.
5. Hence it is easily seen what souls truly love God.

1. THE diligent darting forth of aspirations and prayers of ejaculation and fervent desires to God, joined with true mortification and self-denial, is the most certain as well as the shortest way by which a soul can easily and quickly come to perfection—that is, to the wisdom of mystical theology. For aspirations of this kind efficaciously penetrate and surmount all things which are between God and the soul. Indeed, as often as anyone

withdraws himself from all perishable things and turns his heart wholly to God with humility and love, so often does God meet him and pour new grace into his soul.

2. Truly, we should feel much compassion for those who, given to things of sense and content with external exercises only, neglect throughout their life to enter into the secret sanctuary of their own soul, and there to cultivate the blessed union they might have with God. For whilst they care little for true mortification of themselves, and consume their life and strength in things not principally necessary, they make little or no progress in spirit, and always stick in the same mire. If they would not exactly like to say the words, yet, in reality, in their hearts and by their actions they do say: "Let him who desires unite himself to God, but that is a thing we do not concern ourselves with, for it is not in our line." Yet even ignorant and uneducated people can attain to the very highest wisdom of mystical theology and union. For in this matter no unusual powers of mind are required, but purity and humility of heart, liberty and detachment of mind, with fervent love, are the only qualities necessary. Certainly, a humble and ardent affection will bring men to this union better than a subtle and critical mind. Yea, more, however

clever and learned a man may be, whatever knowledge he may possess, even of the highest things, if he does not humble himself and become as a child, if he is not poor and detached in spirit, he cannot attain to the secrets of that wisdom which God only can teach. Hence, our Saviour, exulting in spirit, said to the Father: *I confess to thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones.**

3. Outward exercises are good and pleasing to our Lord; I mean such things as to sing the praises of God, to say many vocal prayers, to genuflect, to worship God with sensible devotion, to fast, to watch and suchlike things; but the inward exercise by which the soul stretches forth with ardent desire towards God in order to be united to him, not, indeed, by sensible images, but in a certain supernatural way, is incomparably better and superior. They who adhere to external exercises only, with some self-love and according to their own judgement, and do not endeavour to mortify themselves and to join themselves in spirit to God, will, without doubt, after a life spent in such imperfection, have to pay in purgatory a penalty grievous in proportion to the degree in which they

* Matt. xi 25.

sought themselves. The merciful God does not reject such souls, but, desiring to work in them, he waits to see if, perchance, he may find them fit for his divine operations and free from impediments. He leaves to them their own exercises and ideas, for he never forces anyone. But his desire is to lead all to the knowledge of himself, and to unite them to himself, if only they would remove the obstacles that stand in the way. It grieves his divine Spirit to see us content with the lowest things, when he is ready to bestow on us the highest, for he desires to give himself to us in the most excellent way.

4. The soul, when once free from sin and all inordinate attachments, naturally tends to God, its origin, as fire naturally darts upwards or a stone falls downwards. For the natural home of the soul is God, and in him alone is the soul able to rest. Just as the visible sun must necessarily pour its light on a bright mirror placed opposite to it, and form in the mirror its own brilliant figure, so the soul, when once cleansed and free from hindrances, is immediately illuminated by the brilliant rays of the invisible sun, and an image of the same divine sun is most excellently reflected in it. Alas, how great is our blindness and negligence! For what have we been made? We have been made for one end only, and that

is to possess God, to know the abyss of his goodness, and even in this exile to be united to him, and to have a certain foretaste of our ultimate happiness. To this end has our memory been given us, that we may remember God; for this purpose have we intellect, that by faith and contemplation we may make progress in the knowledge of God; for this object have we free will, that we may choose God and love him. Wherefore, then, do we allow these most excellent powers of our mind to languish and become so degraded as to remember, know and love only the lowest things? Why do we even plunge them into a mass of stinking mud? Oh, let us leave, I implore, the darkness, let us turn in disgust from the filth of the earth, and eagerly seek light and purity instead. We should remember our nobility, and reflect that our souls have been sealed with the very image of God, and casting off all sluggishness, and flinging aside all hindrances, we should endeavour to hold fast to God by true love, thus imitating the holy Apostles, the holy martyrs and confessors, and innumerable virgins who held fast and became united to him. They, indeed, truly dead to the world and to themselves, have been closely united to the Lord, amongst whom the most Blessed Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, was the

very first and highest, after her Son, in all holiness and perfection of life.

5. To attain this end, I repeat, we should diligently strive, with unwearied endeavour, in order that, by means of true mortification of self, we may arrive at perfect love of God. For he loves God truly to whom God himself is "the One who is"; whose taste is for heavenly things, while earthly things are to him worthless; who knows how to restrain his exterior senses, and to free his interior senses from all things, and to apply his powers to God; who, when he becomes conscious that he is thinking of vain things and has withdrawn from internal conversation with God, bidding immediate farewell to everything, betakes himself to the essential basis or inner sanctuary of his soul, and wholly turns himself to that most simple good, which is God; to whom, lastly, all created things are bitter compared to the sweetness of the Creator.

CHAPTER VI

THE FOUNDATION OF HIDDEN CONTEMPLATION IS TO REMEMBER AND MEDITATE ON THE LIFE, PASSION AND WOUNDS OF THE LORD JESUS

1. How we should meditate on the Manhood of Christ and often call to mind his wounds.
2. For the passion of Christ is the foundation and first necessary step to the contemplation of the most high Godhead.
3. Amongst all the marvels of the Passion what we should most dwell upon is the unspeakable love with which Christ suffered for us, that we may love him more and suffer with him more sweetly.
4. But chiefly that we may imitate him, and be conformed to his image.
5. We must compassionate Christ, because so many noble souls, for whom he so lovingly suffered, are lost.

1. THE spiritual servant of God should always have the lovely life and passion of the Lord Jesus concealed, as the most precious of all pearls, in the casket of his heart. But, as before said, he must not regard Christ himself purely as Man, but as God and Man; for so he will not in his contemplation be without God. Whenever he finds it difficult to occupy himself with higher meditation, he should willingly go back to the lowly Manhood of our Lord, exercising himself in the remembrance of those things which he did and

endured for us. But he will do well to avoid too violent an effort of imagination, lest the head should be injured. He should put before his eyes a cross or crucifix, the compendium of the life and passion of Christ. In the most sweet wounds of the same most merciful Jesus should he dwell, and take his rest. Whilst he refreshes his body with food and drink he should endeavour to dip each morsel, by devout affection, into the most pure Blood of Jesus, and drink each draught from his crimson wounds. One single humble and loving turning of the mind to the sweet wounds of our Saviour is more pleasing to our Lord than all harmony of voices and sweetness of musical sounds. Rightly should God's true friends weep even tears of blood, because nowadays, all the world over, these most excellent wounds of Christ have been forgotten.

No one at all can humbly read or think of the passion of our Lord, although he should do so without much sensible affection, without reaping from that exercise fruit most useful for salvation; just as no one could touch flour or balm, even with the tip of his finger, without having his fingers whitened with flour or perfumed with the smell of balm. Even if the image of Jesus crucified be only tenderly glanced at, the look will not have been in vain.

2. Therefore should the servant of God impress the beautiful image of the crucified Manhood of Christ on the powers of his soul and the senses of his body, and betake himself wholly to it. For after a time this will in a wonderful way lift him up into the super-essential and formless image, to the eternal Word and Wisdom of the Father, into the most high Godhead of Christ. The Manhood of the most sweet Jesus is the safe way, the very door itself, by which to arrive at his Godhead. In vain will the servant of God aspire to mystical and genuine contemplation, if he will not humbly exercise himself in meditation on the passion of our Lord. For unless he has that for his foundation, the higher he tries to rise by contemplation the lower will he fall, and the more disastrous will be his fall. In truth, even if he should be so flooded with the light of grace as sometimes to be carried out of himself and absorbed into the riches of God, and thus happily lose himself in the light of grace, still, when he returns to himself it will be most suitable for him to recall the interior eyes of his heart to Jesus crucified, always holding fast to this as the foundation of love. *For other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus.** It will be expedient for him

* 1 Cor. iii 11.

sometimes to dwell on the thought of the incomprehensible Godhead, at others on the most noble Manhood of Christ, and to ascend and descend from the one to the other. By this means, *like a tree planted by the running waters,** he will experience a wonderful flow of the river of heavenly grace. So, also, will he happily *go in and go out, and will find pastures*† most sweet, both in the Manhood and in the Godhead of the Lord Jesus. This indeed is the most exalted of all internal exercises when, abstracted from all things, we willingly embrace God only in the inner sanctuary of the soul, which is free from all images of sensible things, and hide ourselves wholly in the Manhood of Christ, and become conformed to him. *Those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be made conformable to the image of his Son.*‡

3. The servant of God should therefore most diligently reflect on the ardent love and unspeakable joy with which the Lord Jesus himself assumed our human flesh and worked out our salvation; how mercifully he thought of us, holding each one of us before the eyes of his heart in all that he did and endured. After immense labours endured for our sakes during the space of thirty-three years, at length he willed to shed his Blood and to

* Ps. i 3. † John x 9. ‡ Rom. viii 29.

submit to a most cruel and ignominious death, that the sins which we have committed and daily do commit might be expiated. The servant of God, recalling to mind this immense mercy and love of the Son of God, should desire to make him a return of love, and should be ready to suffer for his sake, not only the temporal afflictions of this life, but even the very pains of hell for eternity.* From his inmost heart should he compassionate his Lord God, who suffered for him. And if his heart is hard, let him explain its hardness to our Lord, and humble himself. Often the desire of compassion is more pleasing to God than actual compassion itself.†

4. The servant of God must beware of imitating those people—and they are many—who meditate on the passion of our Saviour with great exterior devotion, sweetness and tears, and yet refuse to mortify their vices

* In this holy exaggeration of loving resignation must always be understood the reservation, "if such a thing were possible without any sin against God." *Vide S. Th. Com. in Ep. ad Rom.* ix 3.—TRANSLATOR.

† The reason of this is because, if the desire springs from vehement and supernatural love, that love may outweigh the love contained in the compassion actually felt by another, especially if that compassion were only sensible, which often and easily happens in sensitive natures.—TRANSLATOR.

and to follow him. Not thus should he act, but he should meditate on the passion of our Lord as a true Christian, desiring really to imitate his most holy example of charity, obedience, humility and resignation. He should desire in all things to be conformed to the most sacred Manhood of Christ, and as the spirit of our Lord Jesus was always raised up, burning with love, free from all hindrance, serene, calm and joyful, so should his spirit be also. For Christ, even when on the cross he felt and suffered torments the most grievous, still enjoyed, all the time, in the essence of his soul and in its superior powers the beatific vision of the Godhead, no less than he now enjoys it in heaven. Again, as the soul of Christ was sorrowful, compassionate, modest, meek, mortified and humble, and as his body was sober, chaste, pure, virtuous, laborious and suffering, to these things the spiritual man must take care to conform his own spirit, soul and body. He should earnestly beg of Christ to bestow this grace on him, for nothing is more necessary, since the highest perfection of life is found in this likeness to Christ. This is implied by the desire expressed by the blessed Apostle St Paul, for all the faithful, where he says: *May the God of peace himself sanctify you in all things, that your whole spirit and soul and*

*body may be preserved blameless in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

5. The soul of the true Christian ought indeed to be sad and sorrowful, after the example of the soul of Christ himself, when he considers that many not only do not piously worship God, but even impiously despise him, and spoil the beauty of their souls and lose them utterly by sin. How indeed could he who is really a Christian not be filled with grief when he sees creatures so beautiful and so noble perishing? For every rational soul, since it is sealed with the image of the most high Trinity, is incomparably superior to the heavens and the earth. It has such a likeness to God, from whom it has come, that no merely created intelligence, not even that of our Lady, the Virgin Mother of God, the most excellent of all created intelligences, is able completely to comprehend it. The soul of the lowest beggar is not, according to the dignity of its creation, inferior to that of the most honoured prince.

* 1 Thess. v 23.

CHAPTER VII

INTERNAL DESOLATION AND SUFFERING OFTEN AFFLICT CONTEMPLATIVE SOULS. PERFECTION DOES NOT CONSIST IN WEALTH OF SPIRITUAL COMFORTS

1. Desolation in exercises of the spirit must be patiently endured; nor must the exercises be then forsaken, for to persevere in them then especially pleases God.
2. For true perfection does not consist in the sweetness of spiritual comfort, but in true resignation and cleaving to God.
3. A beginner may indeed ask God for sensible comfort, but there is imperfection in the petition.
4. Therefore those souls must not be troubled from whom God has taken consolation.

1. WHEN the servant of God finds himself deprived of the comfort and sensible inflow of divine grace, but, on the contrary, experiences internal coldness, hardness of heart, darkness, distraction of mind and other miseries of this kind, he must take the utmost care not to give up his pious exercises, to become impatient, to seek to escape from his internal suffering, to abandon his earnest effort after interior conversation with God and to seek comfort by the gratification of his senses, idle talk, hearing news or any other waste of time; but faithful to God, and committing and resigning himself completely

to the will and appointment of God, he should bear his trouble calmly, compel himself to persevere in fruitful exercises or help himself on according to circumstances by some external work for God. At such times he must humbly pray, and should be glad to serve God with labour at his own cost; and he should aspire to him, if not sweetly, at least diligently. For those good things which he does during this time of desolation, although by no means pleasant to him, will, if only he does what he can, rise up to God with a sweet savour, and will be most pleasing to him. He should say, then, to God: " O Lord, if by thine appointment I had to remain all the days of my life, and even to the last day of judgement, without any consolation whatever, I would desire to be ever most willing to bear all things, however grievous, for the love of thee." Those err very much who imagine that their works and exercises are pleasing to God only when they are visited and made joyful by a sensible grace from him.

2. True perfection, therefore, it should clearly be understood, does not consist in feeling much sweetness, nor in the enjoyment of abundant consolation; but it is attained by a man when he gives up himself and all things whatsoever for the love of God; when he

truly denies and mortifies himself; and when, after completely pouring out his own will into the will of God, he remains free and calm in all that happens to him, and holds fast to God, being made one spirit with him. Therefore a man arrives at true perfection by entire resignation and mortification, which no one can flatter himself to possess as long as there remains in him so much as one drop of blood that has not been entirely subdued by a sharp, manifold and daily fight against his vices, and that has not been consumed and completely burnt up with the fire of divine love. It is a common error to imagine all is lost when we are deprived of sensible consolation, and to fancy ourselves once more holy and acceptable to God when it returns; but, as already said, in this we are deceived. Oftentimes God is the most nearly present by grace where he is felt the least, and often dryness of heart is better for a man than the most copious abundance of sweetness. For in dryness and barrenness a man more clearly realizes that of himself he can do nothing. Moreover, that sweet sensation is sometimes granted even to those who are living very evil lives and are far from God. It is, therefore, by no means an undoubted sign of sanctity, but by it God manifests his goodness. A true sign of sanctity and devotion is that equable

promptitude of soul by which a man is prepared to serve God no less fervently in adversity than in prosperity.

3. We are not, indeed, forbidden to ask God with humility to grant us consolation and sensible grace, especially in the beginning of a better life, in order that, helped on by a taste of the sweetness of God's grace, we may more quickly and more completely die to all our vices, and more firmly hold fast to God, our highest good; but still, a certain imperfection lies hidden in this petition, which lacks something of genuine self-denial. The gifts and the consolation breathed forth from God are not God himself, so that we must not rest in them. They who rest in these things even a little, and they who receive the sacrament of the Eucharist in the least degree for their own self-satisfaction, impede themselves from being able to arrive at their origin, God.* We ought to leave God the fullest

* It might be asked, How can the Blessed Sacrament be in any way an impediment to union, being the presence of God himself, a pledge of eternal life given to help us on to union? The author speaks here of not resting in any sensible pleasure merely, in the quiet and pleasure arising from the mere sacramental reception, in which we must not remain lest it impede our spiritual union. It is a subtle abuse of the holy Sacrament which the author blames. A person who rests in this for its

liberty to work in us and give us whatsoever he pleases, when he wills and as he wills; we ought to allow him to lead us through the shadow of death and the darkness of hell.

4. We must not, therefore, be anxious if sensible devotion, sensible love—which is often not purely for God—and exterior tears are wanting to us; but let everyone take the greatest care that he be always united to God by rational, that is intellectual love, or, in other words, by goodwill, and that his best comfort be that God is well pleased. It would be very absurd to say daily in the Lord's Prayer, " Thy will be done," and then to be disturbed and indignant when it is done !

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own sake would probably omit Holy Communion in time of aridity, because it no longer gives pleasure to self.—TRANSLATOR.

CHAPTER VIII

A COLLECTION OF VARIOUS INSTRUCTIONS IMPORTANT TO BE REMEMBERED BY A SPIRITUAL MAN

SECTION I

OF THE SPIRITUAL FOOD OF THE MIND—PRAYER, THE WORD OF GOD HEARD OR READ, AND THE HOLY EUCHARIST

1. How prayer is to be begun and attention secured.
2. Involuntary distraction does not deprive prayer of its merit. The difference between external and internal prayer.
3. Invocation and imitation of saints.
4. The word of God should be heard with reverence and humility, and without vain curiosity.
5. The intention, method and manner of spiritual reading, which should always be joined to prayer.
6. Sacramental or at least spiritual communion every day. Its excellence and wonderful fruit.

1. BEFORE prayer and during prayer the servant of God should free his mind, as far as he can, from all cares, and from images of other things; and thus attending calmly, reverently, simply and lovingly to God present within him, and putting himself present before God, he should pray to him and adore him in spirit and in truth. And in order that he may learn how to attend, he should consider with quiet application, while singing psalms, what words are addressed to God and what are

said by him; and these he should say or hear with religious and grateful mind. And if he finds that he is not as yet able to be sufficiently steadfast in heart, he should not on that account be disturbed, but resigned; and that perfection which his worship lacks he should supply by true humility, goodwill and holy desire. When he has arrived at a state of union, so that God shall be in him and he in God, and this intimate union has been firmly and completely established in the soul; when the servant of God has succeeded in setting his mind free from all that may distract it from God, and has entered the inner sanctuary of his soul, purified from the images of created things, where the pure fountain of the Godhead is—then he will offer an unwandering and steadfast prayer to God.

2. God, we must remember, well knowing the weakness of man, does not reject pious prayers, even when offered with a distracted mind, provided that he who prays does so with diligence, is distracted unwillingly and does not turn away his will from God. Outward prayer, which is said by the mouth only, is like chaff; but inward prayer, which is poured forth from the mind, is the grain; and that in which heart and mouth combine is very pleasing to God. The Canonical Hours

and other prayers to which a man is bound by vow, or the command of the Church or his order, ought by all means to be recited with the mouth. There is no prayer more excellent than that by which a man begs that the most acceptable will of God should be done in himself and in all others.

3. If the servant of God should invoke any saint now glorified in heaven, let him not doubt that the saint can hear his prayer, even if he has employed no vocal prayer. The saint should be regarded as present in God, to whom he is united. Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, and all the saints are indeed pleased when we piously pray and sing hymns in their honour; but no homage is more acceptable to them, no honour we can pay them is greater than imitation of their virtues by being poor in spirit, attending to the presence of God everywhere and diligently betaking ourselves to the inner sanctuary of our souls. True poverty of spirit means real humility of heart, by which a man casts himself down beneath every creature, and is free and detached from all perishable things; by which also he renounces the satisfaction of interior consolations, and when afflicted, distressed, abandoned, laughed to scorn and despised, keeps himself patient for the love of God, not seeking to deliver himself from these trials.

4. The servant of God should listen to the word of God with a ready mind, thirsting for spiritual light; and this disposition he should have without reference to the person of him who may be preaching, or to the simple nature of the things he may utter. In this way he will secure lasting fruit from what he hears, even if he should forget the actual things that were said. And if he has felt weary in listening to pious things, it would be better humbly to blame himself rather than the preacher. Nor should he much care if he perceive certain defects in the preacher's style, provided the truth be spoken. The attention should be concentrated on the truth, looking on it as coming from its origin and fountain, God, without curiously discussing the nature of the channel through which it has run its course. The mind should be ready to put into practice all useful advice that may be heard or read, as far as is practicable.

5. When he occupies himself with sacred reading he should seek purely the honour and glory of God, not his own satisfaction; nor should he read to gratify any mere empty curiosity, nor for the idle pleasure of knowing a number of things. It is well not to read too much at one time, lest the mind may thus lose its calm serenity and the spirit be overladen. Spiritual things should be read with

a quiet diligence of mind and with a mental appetite, not negligently and with disgust. Good and salutary things, though often heard or read before, the spiritual man should always consider new and welcome, without feeling weary. And, indeed, if he only reads such things humbly, piously, simply, diligently and reverently, he will derive immense benefit from them, even if he does not thoroughly understand them. After reading he should give thanks to God, and those things which he has heard or read he should offer to the eternal praise of God in union with the divine love he bears himself. He should reflect on the things he has read, as far as he has an opportunity, and he should beseech God to enable him to guide his life by the things he has read, and through them to improve in the love of God. For prayer renders reading wonderfully fruitful. Certainly, for those who desire to attain to intimate union with God, and thus at length to read the highest things written in the lovely book of life and to contemplate truths unutterable by human language in the incorruptible mirror of the Godhead, it is more necessary to recollect the passion of the Lord, to pray, to aspire to God and to become familiar with the inner sanctuary of their own souls by living within themselves, than

to be continually occupied in reading books written by the hand of man.

6. The servant of God should be anxious to receive the venerable sacrament of the Lord's Body. For by the humble, frequent and devout reception of the Eucharist he will progress more speedily in divine union and holiness of life than by any other exercise. If he does not receive sacramentally every day, he should at least receive spiritually by pious desire and true preparation. In this way, not once only, but often in the day, he may receive our Lord with unspeakable fruit. O most worthy and most sweet sacrament, in which, under the species of bread and wine, we receive the whole Christ—namely, the Body, the Blood, the Soul and the Godhead of Christ—we receive the whole Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. For the three persons of one Godhead and Essence cannot be separated from one another. The whole Trinity, therefore, dwells in the Body of Christ, because the whole Godhead is in it. The fruits, therefore, of the most Blessed Sacrament are many and precious.

(1) He who receives the Lord's Body with due devotion is cleansed from all sins, even from those mortal sins of which he is not conscious or does not remember to have committed, provided only that he is in the

disposition of mind to confess and do penance for them if he did know that he had fallen into them.

(2) He is made partaker of all those good things which Christ has merited for us in his life, passion and death.

(3) Yea, also, he becomes a sharer in all the good things that have been done since the time of Adam, and will be done until the end of the world.

(4) Lastly, he is united to Christ and incorporated with him, and therefore receives strength and power to resist vice and to persevere in good works; and now, adorned with a most pure and excellent life, he is transformed and changed* into God, and filled with all the grace of the most glorious Trinity.

* *Transformatur atque transmutatur in Deum.* These strong expressions must not, of course, be misunderstood to imply that the soul becomes God, which would be absurd. They indicate the intimate and mystical union of love (2 Pet. i 4).—TRANSLATOR.

SECTION II

ALL THAT IS ACCORDING TO THE GOOD PLEASURE OF GOD MUST BE LOVINGLY EMBRACED. THE JUDGEMENTS OF GOD AND THE MYSTERIES OF FAITH MUST BE REVERENTLY RECEIVED AND NOT EXAMINED INTO WITH CURIOSITY

1. For God's sake self-will must ever be put to death, and nothing preferred to obedience.
2. Inspirations of God must be most diligently noticed. A method by which they can be easily recognized.
3. All things are to be referred to God, as the Fountain of all, and in what sense all things were in God from eternity.
4. God's judgements should not be inquired into, nor the mysteries of faith examined with curiosity.

1. THE more anything is opposed to self-will, self-love and sensuality, with the greater readiness should it be embraced and done by the servant of God. When anyone asks a thing of him that is not unlawful, he should immediately deny himself, leave himself and be prepared to do the will of another according to the rules of true discretion.

He should never prefer anything to holy obedience. In fact, it would be better to gather up leaves and fallen twigs of trees through obedience than to be occupied in great works and sublime exercises of our own choosing. The servant of God must obey promptly for God's sake, even if the

superior to whom he owes obedience be very imperfect. Acknowledging him as the vicar of God he should regard him with sincere honour and love. So valuable is obedience that the fathers do not hesitate to say that a man who would willingly fast for the honour of God, but by command of his superior or by the rule of his order, ate, even meat, soberly and moderately, would merit more than another who, content with bread and water, fasted for his own devotion. He cannot arrive at perfection who will not desert his own will and promptly obey.

2. The servant of God should diligently attend to the inspirations of divine grace within him, hearing what the Lord speaks in his soul, and if he be not entangled, distracted and unquiet in mind he will clearly perceive the interior inspirations and touches of God's Spirit. He should ever put himself into God's hands as a living instrument most ready to fulfil his good pleasure, saying with St Paul: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* *

In no one thing, in no exercise should he oppose the divine will. No method or custom of his own, however holy, should he hold fast to with affection. He should do nothing with attachment to his own will and ideas, but should be ever ready to embrace

* Acts ix 6.

those methods and exercises to which he is more powerfully invited and drawn in his own soul by God's grace, by which he finds that the love of God is more vehemently excited, and by which he is more intimately united to God. The way to God is essentially one and uniform, but the exercises are various. In case of doubt whether an interior drawing is from God, he should reflect whether he is completely ready to follow God's will, if he clearly knew it. For if such is really his disposition and he prays to God to illuminate and teach him, he may safely judge that to be from God to which he is more frequently attracted in his own soul, provided there is nothing in it at variance with the teachings of Holy Scripture and the Church. But in matters of serious moment he would do well to consult experienced people and humbly to follow their advice, in order to protect himself against the crafty wiles of the devil, who sometimes transforms himself into an angel of light.

3. The servant of God should refer any beauty he may see, any sweetness he may feel, any perfection he may notice in created things, entirely to the glory and praise of God, who is the fountain and origin of all things. Ascending in mind above all weak and perishable things he should embrace God with

sincere love. If he possesses him, he has all. For God has and contains in himself, in the most overflowing abundance, everything that delights or can give pleasure. Every kind of perfection found divided among different created things, in him is found united, and he, as he is the archetype, or original type, and exemplar, or eminent model, of all, is himself all.* In him all things have their uncreated being. He has certainly in his eternal knowledge the divine models and ideas of those things he has created, and whatever has been made by him was always known by him, always lived and always will live in his mind. Hence the Gospel says: *Whatever was made was life in him.*† We ourselves, therefore, were always in God ideally; in him, I repeat, we were and are uncreated, in whom, that is in whose knowledge, all things live for ever, and are life. In the essence, therefore, of God are the exemplars of all things, and that one divine essence is the one exemplar of all things and the one idea. For every kind of multiplicity is reduced, in the perfectly simple

* *Cf.* Ecclus. xliii 29: *We shall say much, and yet shall want words; but the sum of our words is, "He is All."*—TRANSLATOR.

† John i 3, 4. The ordinary punctuation differs. Blosius joins part of verse 3 with verse 4.—TRANSLATOR.

and superessential essence of God, to unity; and all things in God are one. In God, therefore, are the most true and perfect patterns or models of things, and these remain incorrupt for ever. But in this sensible world the things which we see are only certain symbols or tokens and signs of true things, and perish and pass away with time. The beauty, elegance, sweetness, riches, dignity and perfection of all creatures, compared to the beauty, elegance, sweetness, riches, dignity and perfection of the Creator, are nothing; just as one little drop of water compared to the whole ocean is scarcely anything. And in good truth, if the heavens, the earth and all God has created, together with all he could create—for he could, if he so pleased, create many other worlds more wonderful than this—if, I say, we were to compare all these things to God they would be found so truly nothing, that they would be less than the point of a needle compared to the vast extent of the sky. He, our supreme Creator and God, as he is without beginning and without end, so also is he without alteration or variation, unchangeable, remaining always the same.

4. The servant of God must not inquire, unless he wish to fall into error, why God leaves some in darkness and error and not

others; but leaving to God his own judgements, which are an impenetrable abyss, he must believe for certain that he does nothing and allows nothing unjustly. Nor must he rashly investigate, nor discuss with curiosity the mystery of the most high and incomprehensible Trinity, but simply hold fast, with true and unshaken faith, the mystery of One God in Three Persons, remembering that it is no more possible for anyone to explain the Trinity than to stand on earth and touch the heavens with the finger. For what human intellect can understand how the Father, looking at himself and seeing with a most clear knowledge the abyss of his eternal essence, brings forth, by reason of the abundance of his delights, his own divine Word, or generates his Son, for that knowledge of himself is the eternal generation of his Son? Who can understand how the Holy Ghost proceeds and comes forth from the Father and the Son? Who can comprehend how the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are truly one in essence, though there is a great distinction in Persons, and that each Person has the other two within himself? It is certainly easier to have some inward knowledge of this by divine union than to attempt to explain such incomprehensible mysteries. Those who are illuminated in a wonderful manner

by God and arrive at mystical union with him know with greater certainty those things which belong to the Catholic faith and hidden truth than we know those things that are set before the eyes of our body. Lastly, let not the servant of God endeavour to discover how the true, living and immortal Body of Christ is in the sacrament of the altar, but rather let him remember that nothing is impossible with God,* and preserve a pure and inviolate faith in those things which cannot be comprehended by intellect or reason.

SECTION III

ON THE SPIRITUAL COMBAT IN TIME OF TEMPTATION AND TRIAL

1. Temptations and evil inclinations are allowed even in perfect men that they may fight and win the crown. They are overcome by resignation, the use of the sacraments and confidence in the mercy of God.
2. Patience in trials for God's sake is rightly considered one of the very best signs and tokens of God's election.

1. THE servant of God must by no means be cast down in mind on account of the temptations he may encounter, for the perfection of virtue is purchased by strenuous fighting. God leaves bad inclinations in us for our

* *Cf.* Mark x 27: *With God all things are possible.*

advantage.* His object is that we may hereafter be gloriously crowned in heaven for having now *manfully resisted*,† and *lawfully striven*.‡ It is not fitting that all should arrive quickly at the goal of perfection without undergoing the attacks of temptation. For in nature we find that wheat does not bring forth an abundant harvest unless it has borne the sharpness of winter. It is certain that those who by nature are much inclined to vice because they have strong passions, and who, therefore, at first experience great difficulty in freeing their minds from the evil imaginations which are, as it were, painted there, will make much more distinguished soldiers of God, if only they take diligent care to mortify themselves and to strip their unclean garments from their souls, than those who, not having such strong passions, have more easily obtained freedom from bad and distracting imaginations. Do we not value more highly the figure of a great man, sculptured by dint of long and anxious labour, in stone, than a like figure easily impressed in soft wax?

Moreover, supposing a man who has a difficult nature to conquer and is bravely fighting with himself should depart this life

* *Cf.* Rom. viii 28. † Ps. xxvi 14.
‡ 2 Tim. ii 5.

still imperfect, and have to be detained some time in purgatory; after his purification is finished he will obtain a far higher place in heaven than another who had an easy nature, and, therefore, was not so stout a soldier, and was less earnest in self-conquest, although perhaps he was able to go straight to God without any punishment in purgatory.

Sometimes even perfect men feel the attacks of unruly motions in their lower and animal natures, which their reason and will contend against. In such cases, though a storm rages in the outer man, perfect peace reigns in the inner man. The servant of God, therefore, must not imagine that he forfeits God's grace by what he may suffer against his will in the lower powers of his soul; for God is often accustomed to advance the salvation of his chosen ones by those very things which they imagine are entirely contrary to their salvation. In this way he oftentimes allows temptations to present themselves of the most foul, horrible, yea, infernal nature.

In such straits what must the servant of God do?

(1) He must abandon himself wholly to God, remaining calm and recollected in his soul.

(2) He must on this account by no means

fail to receive Holy Communion or to do his accustomed good works. For nothing that he feels can do him any spiritual hurt as long as his free will does not deliberately consent.

(3) He should no more trouble himself about the blasphemous and other absurd imaginations suggested by the devil than he would about a number of flies buzzing round his head. He should at once turn quietly from them.

(4) At times, when the temptation is more than usually violent and persistent, he should arm himself with the sign of the cross and cry out to God in some such words as these: "O Lord, keep me unspotted in thy presence. Far rather would I die a thousand times over than give way to this wicked suggestion."

(5) He should then take refuge beneath the cross and think of the passion of his Lord.

(6) Even if sometimes he may feel utterly deserted, and it may seem to him as if God were saying, "Depart from ME, I know you not, you please ME not," let him not on that account lose heart, but full of faith, let him say with holy Job: *Although he should kill me, yet will I trust in him.** *Even if the deep should swallow me up,*† he will deliver me. Then turning to God, he should add: "What I have to bear is a heavy load upon me, O

* Job xiii 15. † Ps. lxviii 16.

Lord; and to me it seems of no advantage or use; but thou, who canst not allow anything without a good reason, knowest why these things happen to me. Therefore, throwing myself into the arms of thy goodness, I resign myself wholly to thee."

The servant of God must firmly believe that he cannot be deserted by God unless he has first wilfully deserted God. He, well knowing the weakness of man's nature, most carefully moderates the temptations that afflict his chosen ones, lest they might become more than they can bear.* In this he acts like a tender mother, who, warming her babe at the fire, takes care to hold her hand between the little one and the fire, lest the heat might be too much for it.

2. The servant of God who remembers the sufferings of our Lord, and moreover does not forget his own sins, will easily bear even joyfully any trouble of mind and anguish of heart that may afflict him. From whatever source these pains may arise, he will always receive them from the hands of his Lord, and this even if they should come from his own vicious habits and by his own fault.

He should be ready, if so God willed, to live in sorrow and affliction of spirit, even till the last day of judgement. For the truth is

* *Cf.* 1 Cor. x 13.

that nothing more useful can happen to a man than to suffer tribulation, whether from without or within.

(1) No more certain sign is there that a man is one of the elect of God than tribulation humbly and patiently borne for the love of God.

(2) This we may call the ring, adorned with a glittering stone of priceless worth, by which God espouses the soul to himself.

(3) To suffer for God invests the soul with such honour that a man ought sincerely to esteem himself unworthy of so high a distinction.

(4) In fact, one small trouble calmly borne for God is of incomparably more value than many and great good works.

(5) Every tribulation bears a certain resemblance to the most excellent passion of our Lord Jesus Christ; and, by patiently enduring, a man merits a perfect participation in the same divine passion.

(6) Through tribulations a man obtains gifts from God, and those he already possesses are securely preserved.

(7) Whatever we now suffer God has foreseen from all eternity, and has known the exact nature and degree of our trials. Never would he allow the slightest adversity, within or without, to afflict his elect, nor the least

unfavourable wind to blow on them, unless he saw that this was profitable for their salvation. Cold, heat, hunger, thirst, illness and all other kinds of affliction not only purify, but also wonderfully ornament our souls. God acts like a skilful artist, who delights in touching up his picture, putting in lines here and there and adding or changing colour; thus also does God to the soul. Or again, to vary the comparison, as some noble maiden, about to become the bride of a prince, is decorated with gold and jewels and other ornaments, so does God adorn the soul by allowing it to suffer for him.

God, indeed, says to such as he has chosen for high gifts of holiness, and has in a special way separated for himself: *He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of my eye.** This is true; but nevertheless, rather than suffer these beloved souls to lack the advantage of tribulations, and the purity and beauty they bestow on the soul, he would allow devils and men, yea, also the elements and any other creature, to harass them with trials.

(8) Therefore every kind of affliction and trial, however bitter, must be patiently borne, in place of the pains of hell and purgatory which we have deserved. For a soul truly purified and resigned the very moment

* Zach. ii 8.

it leaves the body flies to a mansion of the heavenly kingdom.

(9) One of the friends of God has written thus about suffering:

" When anyone, feeling affliction and pain, resigns himself humbly and perseveringly to God, this resignation becomes before the Lord like a well-sounding harp, on the chords of which the Holy Spirit, sweetly breathing, delights the ears of the heavenly Father with a hidden and spiritual melody. On this spiritual harp the thicker strings—that is, the powers of the outer man, full of affliction—give forth low and mournful notes; but the more delicate chords—that is, the spiritual part of the soul, which remains full of devotion in willing and patient resignation—give out higher and joyful tones. Sensitive nature, being in agony, groans; but the higher and rational nature remains calm. Indeed, at length the soul becomes the beloved spouse of the eternal Bridegroom, and a majestic queen, through the burning fire of trials that affect even the very marrow of the bones. The burning heat of these afflictions prepares the soul as fire prepares wax to take the form desired by the artist. And it is manifest that if the supreme Artificer desires to impress on the soul a noble image of his own everlasting essence, it is necessary that the soul should

be divested of her old form, and should be supernaturally changed and transformed. For one thing cannot put on the form of another, unless it first put off and lose its own. For this happy change and transformation the almighty God prepares the soul by the most intense sufferings. When he has determined to transform a soul in a sublime manner, and to adorn it with the highest gifts, he no longer washes it with gentle touch, but plunges it entirely into a deep sea of bitterness."

SECTION IV

THE WAY TO PURIFY THE SOUL FROM DAILY SINS AND IMPERFECTIONS

1. Sin should be grieved over as an offence against God, and by loving conversion to him.
2. Daily defects are allowed in order to preserve true humility.
3. Scruples and anxieties of mind about sin, past, present and future, should be calmed.
4. Diligent and loving satisfaction should be offered for sin.
5. We must put all our trust in God, and not in his gifts or in our own strength.

1. WHEN the servant of God sins, he should impute his sin to himself only, and should lament and grieve more that he has offended God, his most faithful and sweet Father, than that he has richly deserved severe and even

eternal punishment. The pain of the bitter reproaches by which his soul is then made contrite by God, he must by no means seek to escape, but he must humbly bear it as a most salutary antidote to the poison of sin. He may exaggerate his offences, but at the same time he must guard against despair. If from his fall he becomes more humble and cautious, the matter will not after all end so badly. Therefore, after he has fallen into some sin he should not inquire too scrupulously how the evil happened,* nor should he reflect too long on his sin in his own mind, flying away, as it were, from God; but he should quickly recollect himself in God, and turning to Christ with a contrite and loving heart, even if he does not experience any sensible feeling of sorrow, he should address our Lord in some such words as these: "O Lord, to thee do I fly: I acknowledge my sin; be merciful to me, a sinner; I cast my iniquities and negligences into the abyss of thy mercies. I renounce all that displeases thee, and I forsake whatever is not thee. I firmly resolve, through thy grace, to amend. Wash me with thy precious Blood. In thee do I hope, O my Saviour most merciful, and with love I

* He should look at once at God, and not at self. *My eyes are ever on the Lord* (Ps. xxiv 15).—TRANSLATOR.

kiss thy right hand, which ever receiveth me after a fall."

Above all is it profitable, immediately after a sin has been committed, to go straight back at once to God, instead of spending a long time in thinking of the sin itself and troubling the mind about it. The sin has disturbed the image of God in the soul, and nowhere can this be put right and this likeness be more quickly restored than in God himself. In fact, God, since he is a fountain of immense mercy, is unable not to succour, is unable not to forgive him who calls upon him humbly and with confidence, even if he had committed all the sins of the world a thousand times over. A shred of linen cast into an intense fire is not so quickly burnt up and consumed as God is ready to pardon a man truly repenting of all his sins. Between the goodness of God and a repentant sinner nothing whatever stands. But the best repentance and the most noble contrition is to have a humble mind and a will turned away from all sin and from everything which could stand in the way of the love of God, and fully converted to God himself.

Oh, how truly should the Lord our God grow sweet to our hearts, since he loves us so much more than we love him! Most liberally does he show himself to us, approach and

offer himself to us, while we all the time, on account of our malice and ingratitude, are most unworthy of him. He oftentimes makes our hearts joyful with the comfort of his grace, though he knows that after a short hour we shall sin again.

2. As to those defects and imperfections which he finds he can in no way correct, the servant of God should not allow himself to be disturbed. He should resign himself to God, and look on these things as the manure scattered over the field of his soul in order to produce a better crop.

For God is accustomed generally to leave certain imperfections and spiritual defects, and some little matters for which they can be blamed, in the souls of even his most beloved ones. These defects are often faults of anger or quickness of temper; or he allows them for a long time to be wearied by feeling the attacks of first motions that are involuntary. The good God acts thus in order that the humility of his servants may be increased by these defects when known to themselves and others. Thus the graces he bestows on them, hidden under these defects, like fire under ashes, may be better preserved. It often, in fact, happens that those who are still unresigned and great in their own eyes have more strength to control first motions, and are stronger in enduring

certain external adversities than humble and truly resigned friends of God. For these latter, though they remain calm inwardly during their trials, are often disturbed in their lower nature, and feel a great shrinking from their sufferings. Therefore should the servant of God beseech Christ that he would supply all his imperfections. If only he remains patient, at length he will merit to hear Christ say within him: "I thank thee, my son, for bearing thy defects patiently to the end, for thus hast thou borne my cross with me."

3. The servant of God should avoid carefully, as serious obstacles to progress, inordinate faintheartedness and sadness, vain scruples of conscience, disquieting cares, and uneasy doubts. He should cast all his cares and troubles upon God with humble and entire confidence. For in this way God will provide for him in all matters, external and internal, better than all creatures could provide.

Those indeed who entangle themselves too much with outward cares and business, and either will not or do not care to trust God, are sometimes allowed to fall into want and misery to make them acknowledge how little their own anxious industry is able to effect. A servant of God devoted to a contemplative

life should only allow himself moderate external business suited to his state.

He should not anxiously revolve within himself whether it will be necessary, after this life is ended, to expiate his sins in purgatory, and for how long, but he should promptly resign himself in all things to God, feeling safe in his hands. He should thank God for all that he may be pleased to do in time or in eternity. He should hope with entire confidence that the most merciful God will lovingly forgive him his sins, but he should not ask, or even desire not to be punished for them. As he loves the divine mercy, so also should he equally love the divine justice, so that he should be ready to suffer even the torments of hell for his sins,* if the glory of the divine justice demanded it and God willed it. By this resignation will he be able to obtain a complete remission and be absolved from both guilt and penalty.

4. He should always acknowledge that all labours and trials are too little to make adequate satisfaction for his innumerable iniquities and sins. All the good he is able

* This must be understood only of the sensible pains of hell, for the eternal separation from God could not be without mortal sin, and it would be a delusion to try to be resigned to that, as God could not will us to be in mortal sin.—TRANSLATOR.

to accomplish and all the adversities he may undergo, according to the good pleasure of God, whom he has offended, he should offer that he may please God and become his friend. In these things he always should look, not at himself, but at the honour of God, the love of God and the will of God. In satisfaction for his sins he should offer to God the merits, labours, works, sorrows and wounds of Christ, for these without doubt will avail as full satisfaction for all his sins.

5. The servant of God must not be so rash as to trust to his own goodwill, nor to his own resolution, however firm, nor in his own good habits, however long they have lasted, nor in his own industry, virtue and diligence, nor even in the gifts he has received from God, but in God himself only, in his mercy only, and he must hope only and entirely in the help of grace. For without him we can in no way begin what is good, nor persevere in good.

Therefore, putting no trust in self, we must trust all to him who can do all. Nothing whatever that we are able to do, to think or to speak, that is in any way good, must we attribute to self as if it belonged to us, but all such things must be acknowledged as coming from God. We must live ever in the abyss of our own nothingness, and we must esteem even those who live the worst lives as better than

ourselves. In truth, whatever good there may be in anyone comes from God and not from himself. For of ourselves we are inclined to all evil, and if God's grace did not keep us back we should commit innumerable and abominable sins. Right and just, therefore, is that sentence of our Lord: *When you have done all that is commanded, say, We are unprofitable servants.**

SECTION V

WATCHFULNESS AND DAILY EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

1. We should advance daily.
2. Examination of conscience.
3. The morning rising and preparation for the day.
4. Of dreams and visions.

1. However far the servant of God may have advanced, he must never lay aside the desire of further progress. For, during our time of exile in this world, there is no union with God so deep or exalted that it may not every moment become more sublime and more profound. However far, therefore, a man may have advanced, he must be as careful as on the first day of his spiritual combat to humble himself, considering all he does as of little worth, and to persevere in diligent labour

* Luke xvii 10.

and self-conquest. As long as a man lives in this world he will always find something in himself to mortify.

Even if he be so far advanced that the sight of no created thing disturbs his soul, even if he would only feel weariness and disgust* at the beauty, however great, of a hundred fair women, let him still be careful to watch over himself. Till death has closed his eyes to all the passing things of this world a spiritual man should diligently watch over himself.

Yea, even if he may have attained such command over himself that, in all places, however distracting, and in whatsoever society he may be, he can remember the presence of God and can remain in union with God, still it is right for him to seek solitude and quiet as much as he can, and thus try to avoid all occasions of imperfection.

2. In the evening, when about to retire to rest, he should observe the following rules:

(*a*) Those occupations not suited to this hour should be avoided.

(*b*) He should examine what he has that day done badly, in what he has failed, how negligent and ungrateful he may have been.

* By the word "disgust" is not meant anything uncharitable, but only the conviction that mere human beauty is vain and of little worth, as ever tending to corruption.—TRANSLATOR.

(*c*) He should acknowledge these faults to God, with the purpose of confessing them afterwards to the priest.

(*d*) With this should be united a firm purpose of amending his life by the help of God's grace.

(*e*) Lastly, he should compose himself in bed with all modesty, and fall asleep amid holy thoughts and pious desires, so that with the spouse in the Canticle he may say: *I sleep, but my heart watcheth.**

3. In the morning he should begin the day in a fervent manner.

(1) The spiritual man should accustom himself to turn his first waking thought, his first intention and his senses to God with a loving joy, in order that he may be capable of the visitation of God's grace.

(2) He should offer himself to the eternal praise of God.

(3) If, however, on waking he should feel heavy and weighed down with fatigue so that he cannot easily raise his mind to God, he must not be cast down, but bear this inconvenience with humility and patience. For God will measure his devotion, not by that first confusion and heaviness that weighs down his soul, but by the goodwill he shows in his pious works afterwards.

* Cant. v 2.

(4) Even if he should have been afflicted by anything in sleep that in waking hours he would have detested, let him not be disturbed, but, turning his thoughts to God in the first moment of returning reason, trust in his grace.

4. Dreams and visions should not be incautiously believed. For the devil easily deceives those who lean upon them, seek them, and think much of them. It may even be that after many true visions the wicked spirit, under the guise of an angel of light, may at last, perhaps only once, mix himself in them, and overturn an imprudent man. Visions must be examined carefully according to the teaching of Holy Scripture and the writings of the saints, and if they perfectly tally they may be received, but if not they must at once be rejected.

It is, moreover, necessary to observe carefully whether the person who has the vision is truly humble. For a divine revelation makes a man poor in spirit, resigned and docile, while, on the contrary, a diabolical illusion renders him proud, attached to his own ideas and obstinate.

Many of God's special and perfect friends do indeed have favours from him.

(*a*) Sometimes they are rapt in ecstasy and see wonderful visions.

(*b*) They hear words spoken to them, or see with their eyes visions shown them in corporeal form.

(*c*) At other times the visions are intellectual, being spiritual impressions made on their souls to teach them some truth necessary for themselves or others; or prophecies of future things.

Those things, indeed, that can be explained in words are not very much, but those things which perfect men experience, when they are entirely absorbed in God and intimately united to him, are not able to be expressed in words, or even comprehended in the mind.*

The truly perfect rest in none of the gifts of God. But imperfect men occasionally have some kind of trance or dream, or, rapt out of themselves, they may see wonderful things in imaginary forms, but, being imperfect, easily abuse the gifts of God, either making them a cause of vainglory or resting in them for their own pleasure and satisfaction.

* *Cf.* 2 Cor. xii 4.

CHAPTER IX

HOW WE SHOULD UNITE OUR WORKS WITH THOSE OF CHRIST: AND HOW OUR DEFECTS MAY BE SUPPLIED

1. We ought to unite all we do, by a pure intention, to the merits of Christ.
2. This should be done before every action.
3. Also after the action is completed.
4. Also in all trials.
5. The offering of Christ's merits and of his body for our own and others' salvation.
6. Everything should be asked through Christ.
7. Even our imperfections should be offered to Christ, that he may supply.
8. God, through revelations, has taught us to join what we do to the merits of Christ.

1. THE servant of God should form the holy custom of offering all his works by a pure intention for the honour of God. He should be careful to join and unite all he does and all he suffers to the actions and sufferings of Christ, through prayer or desire. In this way the works and trials that are in themselves, and when looked at as belonging to the servant of God himself, vile, worthless and imperfect, will become noble, of the highest value, and most pleasing to God. They receive an unspeakable dignity from the merits of Christ, to which they are united, as

a drop of water poured into a vessel full of wine is entirely absorbed by the wine, and receives the full flavour and colour of the wine. The good works of those who piously practise this union with Christ's actions incomparably excel the good works of those who forget it.

2. Therefore the servant of God before each of his actions should offer it to God. He can do this without words, by simply seeking and desiring the pure honour of God in what he does, by the internal intention of his mind. But if he would prefer to express this intention, he may use words of this kind to God the Father: " O holy Father, I commend myself and all my actions to thee, in union with the love of thy well-beloved Son, and I beseech thee to deign to receive whatever I do, for the eternal praise of thy name, and for the salvation of all men."

Or he may speak thus to Christ: " O Lord Jesus Christ, who art within me by thy divine nature, deign to do this action through me, in a way pleasing to thee and useful to the salvation of all."

Before eating or sleeping it would be well to say: " O Lord Jesus, grant that I may take this food soberly for the honour and glory of thy name "; or: " May I take this sleep in a modest way, in union with that sweet piety

with which thou, O God, didst take on earth thy bodily food and sleep."

Some souls find spiritual savour in devout meditation, while eating, on words like these: "May the virtue of thy divine love, O my beloved Jesus, incorporate and intimately unite me to thee." Or while drinking: "May the sweetness of thy divine charity, O most loving Jesus, flow into my soul, and penetrate my whole being to thy eternal praise."

Those who live in monasteries, or in any religious congregation where there is holy reading during meals, should attend to what is read if they can understand it.

3. The servant of God ought moreover to commend his works and exercises to the kind Heart, sweeter than honey itself, of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he may amend and perfect them. For the Heart of Jesus is inseparably united to the Heart of the Godhead, and all good flows continually from it. He should offer his works and exercises in some such manner as this: "O good Jesus, I offer this work, these my exercises, to thy divine Heart, to be amended and made perfect. To thee do I offer them for thine everlasting praise and for the profit of the whole Church, in union with that most sweet love with which thou, our God, didst will to become Man

and die for us." Or, more shortly: "I offer these actions and exercises in union with thy most perfect ones."

Likewise should he offer his prayers in union with the prayers of our Lord, and his fasts in union with the fasting of Christ. His meals and sleep he should join with that wondrous love which made Christ, the incarnate God, condescend to take bodily food and sleep while on earth. Moreover, also, his words should the servant of God offer in union with the most holy words of Jesus Christ, and the tears he may shed at any time, with the most pure tears of the Saviour of the world. If this oblation is made to God the Father, the following words, or others like them, may be said: "O holy Father, I offer to thee these my actions, prayers, words, etc., through thine only-begotten Son, in the power of the Holy Ghost, to the eternal praise of thy name and for the salvation of all men."

4. His trials and afflictions, whether great or small, external or internal, the servant of God should offer in some such manner as this:

"Most sweet Lord Jesus Christ, I offer to thee, in union with thy venerable passion, this trial, temptation, grief, calamity, and I unite this sorrow to all that thou didst endure

for me; I offer all for the eternal praise of thy name and for the salvation of all thy Church."

Or, speaking to the eternal Father: "Holy Father, I offer all that afflicts me to thee, in union with the most sacred passion of thy well-beloved Son, in everlasting praise of thy name, and for the salvation of all men."

5. As a full reparation, expiation and satisfaction for your own sins and negligences, and for the sins as well as for the salvation of others, both living and dead, offer to God the Father the merits of Christ. Offer his incarnation, his birth, his daily life on earth, his passion, death, resurrection and ascension.

Or again, more in detail, offer his humility, to make amends for your pride; his patience, to atone for your impatience; his chastity, for your want of purity; for your malice offer his innocence.

Or at another time thus address Christ: "I implore thee, O my Lord, answer for me, and deign to satisfy for my sins, offering to thy Father the merits of thy most holy Manhood."

In like manner should we offer for our own sins and those of others the sacred Host—that is, our Lord's Body under the sacramental veils.

Here may also be added as a useful admonition that the same holy Host may be offered

for the increase of the joy and glory of any saint already in the glory of heaven.

So also the most sweet Heart of Jesus, the treasure-house of all beatitude, may be presented to the saints for the increase of their glory—that is, their accidental glory.

6. If the spiritual man should ask for pardon of sin, or any other grace, in the name of the Son, most easily will he obtain what he asks. So he may say to God the Father: "O Father most merciful, have mercy on me; be merciful to me, a sinner; forgive my offences and negligences, through thine only-begotten Son." For when we ask anything piously, or make any offering through the Son, it is not possible that this petition or oblation should be anything but pleasing to God the Father; as a thing seen through a transparent gem, or even glass of a golden or purple hue, cannot but appear of a golden or purple colour. For neither in heaven nor on earth hath the Father anything more dear to him than his only-begotten Son. Whence also our Mother, the Church, is wont to end her petitions thus: "Through Jesus Christ our Lord."

7. In the following, or some kindred method, may the spiritual man beg of Christ to supply his imperfections. "O good Jesus! far too imperfectly do I serve thee and

praise thee. My desire of thee is much too weak, and my love of thee too cold. Far, alas, too far am I from true self-denial, mortification and humility; from meekness, patience, charity and purity; therefore I beg of thee to supply thyself what is wanting in me, and to offer to thy Father thine own divine Heart."

Or, again, thus: "I commend to thy divine Heart the office which I have said, and the praises of thy name, my lukewarm and distracted service, asking thee to amend and perfect it. I offer it to the glory of thy name and for the welfare of thy Church, in union with that love with which thou didst pray on earth to thy Father and praise him. I beg of thee to praise him most perfectly."

When such things are said with true humility of heart, Christ Jesus most undoubtedly supplies what is wanting to human weakness. We must believe this, and without doubt it will be done. For it is an unquestionable truth that we shall obtain from God all things really useful for us, if only, with humble and unshaken confidence, we hope to receive them. To what may we liken him who has not this humble trust, but, while asking Christ to satisfy for him, to supply for him and to adorn him with his merits, remains still discouraged and cast down with doubt and fear, full of distrust? Verily, he is like a man who,

having exchanged his own vile and filthy garments for royal robes, knoweth not how to behave in a way becoming the dress that has been given him, but acts like a rude unmannerly person in the royal presence, walking in a boorish, shamefaced way, instead of advancing with courtly manners.

8. All these things has God been pleased to reveal to his most familiar friends. By following this method we may render our works most noble. In this way we can enrich our poverty from the inexhaustible treasure of the merits of Christ, and adorn our souls with the beauty of these same merits. In this way also may we most easily satisfy for our sins.

NOTE.—Many of the practices and prayers recommended in this chapter by Blosius were revealed by our Lord himself to St Gertrude.

CHAPTER X

A MOST PIOUS DAILY EXERCISE EXPLAINED, BY WHICH A MAN MAY SET GOD ACTUALLY BEFORE HIM

1. First act of interior recollection, sorrow for sin.
2. Second act, remembrance of the benefits of Christ, with thanksgiving.
3. Self-humiliation and conformity to the good pleasure of God.
4. Petition for those things necessary for union with God.
5. Invocation of the saints.
6. Prayer for the living and the dead.
7. Praise of the Holy Trinity.
8. Loving aspirations.

1. FIRST interior act, sorrow for sin. He who beginneth a spiritual course of life ought always, so far as human weakness will allow, to endeavour to be recollected and to dwell in the secret chamber of his own soul with God. But over and above this constant habit of recollection, he ought every day, without fail, unless hindered by some insuperable impediment, to seek a special audience with the soul's heavenly Spouse, and strive to unite himself to God, whether he may feel any sensible sweetness of devotion or not. For this exercise a suitable hour should be appointed.

The exercise of various aspirations set down in Chapter IV helps not a little to unite the soul to God in prayer; but another is here given, which the holy fathers consider to be most useful, and therefore the spiritual beginner must not undervalue it.

First, therefore, with much recollection of the powers of the soul and senses of the body, throw yourself in spirit at the feet of the Lord Jesus, and deplore your sins humbly, yet calmly and sweetly. Cast them all into the abyss of the mercies of God, that, utterly absorbed, they may be consumed and reduced to nothing by the fire of God's love. Most earnestly wish that you had never offended God. Purpose with all the force of your will, by the help of his grace, never to displease him wilfully again. Ask for pardon through the merits of Christ's Manhood, through the merits of the Blessed Mary, and of all the saints of God. Beg the favour of being washed by the precious Blood of the Lord Jesus himself, and so to become perfectly healed and made holy. Then trust with full confidence that now you have received full remission and pardon of sin.

2. Then, rising, call to mind briefly the life and sufferings of Christ, and give thanks to him, your Redeemer.

3. After this, prostrate yourself in spirit

beneath every creature. Prefer all men, by a deliberate act, to yourself. Embrace all men by the arms of charity. Renounce all that is not God. Resign yourself fully to the good pleasure of God, and offer yourself into his hands, as ready to bear every trial and adversity for him.

These acts of humility, resignation and abandonment should be made sincerely and with full acceptance of the will. If, however, you feel that you cannot yet make them with full sincerity of heart and will, still offer them to God with all the sincerity you can, and the Lord will be pleased. If you cannot yet be entirely resigned, at least desire so to be.

4. The next act should be an earnest petition to the Lord himself for those things which are necessary for you, and especially that you may arrive one day at perfect union with him.

5. Then proceed to invoke the most glorious Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, and the other blessed citizens of heaven, in order that the graces you desire to obtain may be yours.

6. Moreover, you should pray for all men, since for all men Jesus our Lord deigned to offer himself as a living Victim to the Father. Pray, not only for all Christians, but for all infidels over the whole face of the globe.

Think with the most tender compassion of all those unhappy ones who by sin deface the beautiful image of God impressed on their souls, and banish themselves from eternal happiness and the heavenly kingdom. Also look with compassion at the many souls of the faithful departed still detained in the pains of purgatory. Thus you will take a charitable interest in the whole family of your Lord, and you will desire with your whole heart the salvation of all. This charity for others will speedily draw down the mercy of God on yourself.

7. After this, direct your prayer to the most Holy Trinity, and offer the praises of your heart. Have an ardent desire to praise God more than you do and more than you can. For God looks at the will, the desire; and he considers a man to have done well all that the will really desires. He takes the will for the deed, although the man cannot really perform and carry out what he sincerely desires. Our desires are, in fact, as great before God as we truly and sincerely wish them to be.

8. Lastly, the spiritual man will take care lovingly to aspire unto God, and with inflamed desire of will to ask for a blessed union with him.

CHAPTER XI

THE DAILY EXERCISE DESCRIBED IN THE LAST CHAPTER IS HERE THROWN INTO A FORM OF PRAYER, AS A SPECIMEN, BY THE DEVOUT USE OF WHICH THE SPIRITUAL MAN MAY ADVANCE MUCH IN DIVINE UNION

1. Acknowledgement of sin with sorrow.
2. Thanksgiving for the benefits of Christ.
3. Humility and resignation of self to God's good pleasure.
4. Petition for those things necessary for union.
5. Invocation of the Blessed Virgin and the saints.
6. Prayer for the Church and for all men.
7. Praise and glory to the most Holy Trinity.
8. Loving aspirations.

HERE I will throw the daily exercise I have recommended into a form of prayer, in order that, by this specimen of what he should aim at, I may please and instruct the beginner in a spiritual course.*

1. *Acknowledgement of Sin and Contrition.*

O Lord Jesus Christ, my God, what shall I say to thee? I bow the knees of my heart, and I acknowledge to thee my sins. Indeed

* This form is not meant by Blosius to be followed rigidly, but to serve as an example, and to be used freely, enlarged or abridged, as each one pleases and is led by the interior grace of God.—TRANSLATOR.

I have sinned, and done evil before thee. Against thee have I sinned, my most kind Maker. I have sinned against thee, my most sweet Redeemer. I have sinned against thee, my most loving Benefactor. Alas! exceedingly ungrateful and unfaithful have I been to thee.

Most vile am I—dust and ashes, mere nothing. Have mercy, have mercy, have mercy on me. All my iniquities, shortcomings and all that has been against thy will, and such things are innumerable and most grievous, I put into thy most beloved wounds; all of them I cast into the immense fire of thy love, I bury them in the infinite abyss of thy mercies. Would that I had never offended thee. Would that I had never hindered the work of thy grace in me. Would that I had always pleased thee, and had always obeyed in all things thine inspirations and thy will. I purpose henceforth, through thy grace, to avoid whatever displeaseth thee. I am ready to die rather than wilfully offend thee.

O loving Jesus, be merciful to me, and forgive me through the merits of thy human nature, through the merits of thy most blessed Mother and of all thine elect. Wash me with thy precious Blood; cleanse me perfectly; heal me, and make me holy.

2. *Remembrance of the Benefits of Christ with Thanksgiving.*

I adore thee, I praise thee, I glorify thee. I bless and thank thee, O Lord Jesus, for all thy mercies and benefits. I give thee thanks, O Son of the living God, because by thy exceeding charity, by which thou didst love me, thou didst deign to become Man. For my sake thou didst will to be born in a stable; to be wrapt in swaddling clothes; to be laid in a manger; to be nourished by the Virgin Mother with a little milk; to endure poverty and want; to be wearied during three and thirty years with many labours and trials.

For me and for my sins thou didst will to fall into an agony and to be bathed in a sweat of blood; to be ignominiously made prisoner; shamefully bound, unjustly condemned; to be defiled with spittle; to be struck by blows and buffeted; to be clothed in a white garment as a fool.

For my sake thou didst will to be cruelly scourged and crowned with painful thorns, with nails to be fixed to the cross, to have gall and vinegar for thy bitter drink.

Thou, who clothest the stars with glory, didst will to hang for me on the cross, naked, despised, wounded and racked with intense pains. For me thou didst pour forth thy

most precious Blood. For me thou didst die.

O sweet Jesus, my only salvation, grant that I may love thee with most fervent love, and compassionate thee from my inmost heart. With the arms of my heart's love I embrace thy venerable cross, and I kiss it in order to show honour and love to thee. I salute the spiritual roses of thy wounds which drop sweetness, those wounds thou didst undergo for me, and in which thou hast engraved me. All hail, O life-giving wounds of my Lord and my Lover, bringing me salvation!

3. *Humility and Conformity to the Good Pleasure of God.*

Behold, O worshipful Saviour, I, an abominable sinner, put myself willingly below all created things, in the very lowest place, for I am unworthy to be on the earth. I prefer all men to myself.* I subject myself to all, and I am willing to make myself the servant of all. I desire to embrace all in sincere charity, and especially those who are disagreeable to me or those who have injured me.

I renounce for thy love all iniquity and vanity, all delight that is not for thee, all self-

* *Cf.* Phil. ii 3.

will and unmortified desire. I abandon and reject all that is below thee; and I choose thee before all. I resign myself entirely to thee. I desire and pray that thy most gracious will may be done in me and by me in time and eternity. I offer myself to thee and abandon myself into thy hands, ready, by thy grace and for the glory of thy name, to bear any disgrace and injury, any contempt and reproach, any trial and pain. I am ready to forgo all sensible comfort. I do not refuse to live, if it is thy will, in the same poverty and affliction in which thou didst live.

4. *Prayer for those Things Necessary for Union with God.*

O most sweet Jesus, mortify in me whatever is displeasing to thee. Adorn me with thy merits and virtues. Give me true humility, obedience, meekness, patience and charity. Give me a perfect control over my tongue and over all my members and senses. Grant me cleanness of heart, detachment of spirit, inward liberty and true recollection of soul with thee. Conform my spirit to the Spirit of thy blessed human nature, my soul to thy holy Soul, and my body to thy most pure Body. By the light of thy Godhead calm and enlighten my inmost soul. I believe that thou art within me according to thy Godhead;

deign, therefore, to see by my eyes, to hear by my ears, to speak by my tongue, and to use all my members and powers as pleaseth thee. Free me from all those things that prevent perfect union with thee. Through thy most venerable wounds I beseech thee to draw me into the centre of my soul, purified from all imperfection that I may dwell there transformed in thee, my God and my origin. Grant to my soul *a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting*,* in order that I may know thee clearly, may love thee ardently, cleave to thee by intimate union, and rest in thee by quiet possession for the praise of thy name.

Hear me, O my God, not according to my will, but according to thy good pleasure. Hear me in the way best fitting for thy honour and my salvation.

5. *Invocation of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints.*

O Mary, most sweet Mother of God, O most glorious Queen of heaven, take pity on me. Intercede for me, O white lily of the bright and never changing Trinity, that through thee I may be fast bound by perfect love to thy Son, Jesus Christ, and be a man according to his Heart.

* John iv 14.

O all ye saints of God, and all ye blessed angels, help me. Pray for me, O ye unfading flowers of the heavenly country, that I may ever please the most high King, the sweet contemplation of whom, face to face, is your everlasting joy.

6. *Prayer for the Living and the Dead.*

O most merciful Jesus, have mercy on thy Church, have mercy on all for whom thou hast shed thy sacred Blood. Convert all miserable sinners. Recall heretics and schismatics. Enlighten infidels who know thee not. Help all who are in any necessity and trial. Be with all who have asked or who desire my prayers; with my parents, kinsfolk and benefactors. Make all men pleasing to thee. Grant to the living pardon and grace, to the faithful departed eternal rest and light. For all men I offer thee thy precious Blood, all that thou hast willed to do and to suffer for our salvation. I offer all the merits of thy life on earth.

7. *Praise of the Blessed Trinity.*

O most high, most kind, most merciful Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, teach, direct and help me, who hope in thee. Eternal Father, through thine infinite power, take to thyself my memory, and fill

it with holy and godlike thoughts. O everlasting Son, through thine eternal wisdom, enlighten my intellect, and enrich it with the knowledge of the supreme truth and of my own nothingness. O Holy Spirit, who art the love of the Father and the Son, through thine incomprehensible goodness draw my will to thyself, and light up within it the unquenchable fire of thy charity. O adorable Trinity, would that I could love and praise thee as perfectly as the angels and saints love and praise thee!

Behold, Lord, as far as my power goes, I magnify thy wisdom and thy merciful omnipotence; I bless thine almighty and merciful wisdom; I glorify thy wise and almighty mercy.

But since I cannot praise thee as I ought, with any praise worthy of thee, do thou thyself deign most perfectly to praise thyself in me. Had I the love of all creatures, most willingly would I pour it out on thee alone.

8. *Loving Aspirations.*

O Lord God, most dear to me, as my first beginning. O divine nature, perfect in most simple unity; absolutely unchanging in thy calm serenity; worthy of infinite love. Profound abyss, most sweet, most desirable, full of exquisite delight. O light, pleasant to the

eye of the soul, and sweetness to the spirit. O torrent of inestimable delights. Sea of unspeakable joys. Boundless fulness of all good. My God and my all! Thou perfectly satisfiest my desires. What do I want save only thee? Thou art my only and unchangeable good. Thee only ought I to seek; thee only do I seek and desire. Oh, draw me after thee. Burn me up in the fire of thy consuming love.

Look down with pity on my desolate state of poverty, ignorance and blindness. Behold, I knock; open to me. Open the door for me, an orphan crying out to thee. Plunge me deep down into the abyss of the Divinity; absorb me entirely, and make me one spirit with thee, that thou may be able to find delight in me.

Those who find this exercise too long may divide it into different parts, or compress it into few words, or use it without words.

CHAPTER XII

WHAT A SPIRITUAL MAN MAY HOPE FOR, IF HE PERSEVERES IN THE COURSE LAID DOWN IN THIS WORK. HOW THE HIDDEN OR MYSTICAL UNION IS WROUGHT IN THE SOUL OF THE PERFECT, AND SOME WARNINGS OR ADMONITIONS REGARDING IT. OF THE HIGHEST POINT OF THE SPIRIT; THE ESSENCE OR INNER SANCTUARY OF THE SOUL

SECTION I

MYSTICAL UNION IS OFTEN VOUCHSAFED TO THE SOUL THAT IS CONSTANT IN PERSEVERANCE

1. God does not vouchsafe to give mystical union except to a soul that has persevered humbly, faithfully and patiently in the holy exercises already indicated.
2. A formula to assist the soul in sighing after union through holy aspirations.

1. If the spiritual beginner is careful to exercise his soul daily in the manner laid down, and thus to unite himself to God; if, through internal conversations and loving desires, he strives without ceasing to join himself to God; if he takes care to persevere constantly in self-denial and mortification and never gives up his holy purpose, either on account of his frequent falls or because he becomes discouraged by the innumerable

distractions of his mind, he will certainly arrive at perfection and mystical union, if not in this life at least in death. And even if he should not arrive at it then, most certainly will he arrive at it after the death of the body.

For in eternity he will enjoy that perfect union in greater or less degree, according to the greater or less intensity of the desire with which he sought it here below. God will bestow upon us an eternal reward for our good desires, even though in this pilgrimage we never attain to what we desire.

Therefore deal manfully. Ask, seek, knock with perseverance, and patiently wait. Call to mind the faithful promise of the Lord Jesus: *Every one who asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.**

Believe, without doubt, that not even the least little prayer nor the least sigh breathed forth to God can go without its fruit.

The perfection you desire and have not yet attained, love in others, who are God's special friends. Rejoice, and thank God for the gifts which the Lord confers on them. Thus, far removed from all envy, you can make the good things bestowed on others your own by charity and sincere rejoicing with them.

* Luke xi 10.

2. The spiritual man will find much fruit from frequently considering in his mind such words as these: "O Lord God, thou art always present with me, dwelling in the inmost sanctuary of my soul. O most simple and most joyful good, when shall I find thee, when shall I cleave closely to thee? O my beginning, from whom I am, most desirable in thyself, when shall I return to thee and be supernaturally transformed after laying aside the old form? O God, my Lord, have mercy on me, a poor exile; have mercy on me, a vile sinner. Wash and sanctify my heart; raise up and enlighten my mind.

"Make my soul pure, simple, free and detached. Make me a man after thine own Heart. Kindle within me the fire of thy love, and entirely consume me in it, that my soul, utterly melted, may flow into thee, may be united to thee without any medium, face to face, to the praise of thy name. O living Son of God, Jesus Christ, make me conformed to thy sacred human nature."

SECTION II

DESCRIPTION OF MYSTICAL THEOLOGY OR UNION. HOW THIS WONDERFUL UNION IS CELEBRATED IN THE PERFECT SOUL

1. A description, sweet, yet sublime, of that hidden union which is called mystical theology, by which the soul is, in a certain sense, deified, or transformed into God.
2. The same union described in the words of Dionysius the Areopagite, who was the first to give to that act, or union, the name of mystical theology.
3. How happy is the state of a holy soul that has been brought to this union.

1. HAPPY indeed is that soul which is filled constantly with an earnest desire for purity of heart and holy introversion, or recollection of spirit, and entirely renounces all self-love, self-will and self-seeking. For such a soul merits to approach nearer and nearer to God.

At last, when its higher powers have been raised up, enlightened and adorned by divine grace, the spirit will attain to a simple unity, and will arrive at pure love without images in the imagination, and at a simple knowledge of the mind without reflections. In this state, since it is now capable of receiving from God a grace of unspeakable excellence, it is brought to that living fountain which floweth forth from eternity and with exceeding abundance refresheth the minds of the saints.

Now the powers of the soul shine like stars, and the soul itself is fit to contemplate the abyss of the Godhead with a calm, simple and joyful intuition, without any imagination and without any reflections in the intellect.

When, therefore, the soul in this purified state turns itself entirely to God with love, an incomprehensible light shining in its depths, the eye of the reason and intellect is obscured by the dazzling light, but the simple eye of the soul itself remains open and not dazed by the light. This eye is a pure, simple, uniform *thought*, raised above all *reflections* of the intellect.

Moreover, as the natural light of the intellect is darkened by such excess of light, the soul sees nothing in time, but raised above time and place, takes to itself, as it were, a certain characteristic of eternity.

For, losing the sight of all images and the distinction and consideration of created things, it learns now by experience that God far transcends all bodily, spiritual and divine images, as well as all the mind can understand about him, whatever can be said or written about him and whatever name can be given him.*

* *Cf.* Ecclus. xliii 29: *We shall say much, yet shall want words; but the sum of our words is: "He is All."* See also at the end of the chapter.—TRANSLATOR.

The soul clearly perceives that all these things are infinitely distant from the real truth of the divine essence, and that the essence of God is above all names. The soul does not see the essence of God, whose presence it feels.

Hence, with an intuitive knowledge of God, without any exercise of thought, it rests quiet in the love of God, pure, simple, and yet unknown, because above all comprehension. For, in truth, the divine light, on account of its exceeding brightness, is inaccessible, whence also it is called darkness.*

Here the soul receives the hidden word which God speaks in the inward silence and in the secret depths of the soul. This hidden word it receives, and experiences the happy embrace of mystical union.†

For when, through love, the soul goes beyond all work of the intellect and all images in the mind, and is rapt above itself (a favour only God can bestow), utterly leaving itself, it flows into God: then is God its peace and fulness. In this peace of mind the soul can rightly sing: *In pace, in idipsum, dormiam et*

* *Clouds and darkness are round about him* (Ps. xcvi 2). *He that is a searcher of majesty shall be overwhelmed by glory* (Prov. xxv 27). See also Ecclus. iii 22-25.

† *Cf.* Apoc. ii 17.

*requiescam—In peace, in the self-same, I will sleep and I will rest.**

The loving soul, as I have said, flows out of itself, and completely swoons away; and as if brought to nothing, it sinks down into the abyss of divine love, where, dead to itself, it lives in God, knowing nothing, feeling nothing, save only the love that it tastes.†

It loses itself in the infinite solitude and darkness of the Godhead; but so to lose itself is rather to find itself.‡

Then, putting off whatever is human and putting on what is divine, it is, as it were, transformed and changed into God, as iron placed in fire receives the form of fire, and is changed into fire. Just as the iron thus glowing with fire does not cease to be iron, so the soul, as it were, deified, does not change its nature and still remains itself.§

The soul, therefore, remains itself; but whereas it was cold before, now it burns; whereas it was dark before, now it shines with light; whereas it was hard before, now it has become soft.

The essence of God has so flowed into its

* Ps. iv 9.

† *Cf.* Col. iii 3. By "knowing nothing" is meant nothing that distracts the soul from God.—TRANSLATOR.

‡ *Cf.* John xii 25. § *Cf.* 2 Pet. i 4.

essence, that we may say the soul has, as it were, the same tint or colour.*

Enkindled with the fire of divine love, and entirely liquefied, the soul passes into God,† is united to him without any medium, and becomes with him one spirit, even as gold and brass are welded into one mass of metal.‡

Among the souls who are thus carried out of themselves and rapt into God, there are different degrees of the divine favour, for they are more deeply and sublimely absorbed into God in proportion to the efficacious and ardent way in which their love turns to him, and in proportion to the perfection of their self-denial and freedom from all self-seeking.

2. *How St Dionysius the Areopagite describes this Mystical or Hidden Union.*§

Dionysius the Areopagite, in the book he wrote on mystical theology, exhorts Timothy,

* *Plane tota Deicolor est; quia essentia ejus essentiâ Dei perfusa est.*

† *Cf.* Cant. v 6.

‡ By this comparison the closeness of the union is shown; but it goes no further. The union of gold and brass results in something neither pure gold nor pure brass. In this there is no likeness to divine union.—TRANSLATOR.

§ The books here quoted are not now believed to be the work of St Dionysius the Areopagite (Acts xvii 34), but to be written under his name. The

to whom the book is addressed, to labour for this union in the following terms:

"Do thou, O beloved Timothy, in order to come by intense exercise to the knowledge of mystical truth, leave the senses and intellectual operations, and all sensible and intellectual things, yea, all things which are actual or possible. Having left all things, stretch thyself forth with all thy strength, through a certain ignorance, to a union with him who is above all substance and all science. For, indeed, when thou hast gone out freely, absolutely and purely from thyself and from all other things, then, all things being removed, and thou thyself being free from all things, thou wilt fly up to the supersubstantial ray of the divine darkness."

After some other words, he thus proceeds: "The soul in the state of contemplation, leaving visible and intellectual things, enters the mystical cloud of ignorance, in which, having done with all the helps of science and knowledge, it is absorbed entirely in him who

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author is unknown, but they were written in Greek, not earlier than the end of the third, and more probably during the course of the fourth, century. Though not written by the disciple of St Paul, they are works of deep theological learning and marvellous spiritual insight, and have ever been held in high estimation in the Church.—TRANSLATOR.

utterly eludes all touch and sight, and transcends all things."

And further on: "Let us pray to be admitted into this clear and lucid cloud, that, through loss of natural sight and knowledge, we may see and know him who transcends all sight and knowledge; for thus not to see and not to know is to see and to know in very truth."

The same Dionysius, writing to Dorotheus the deacon, speaks of this divine cloud in the following words:

"The divine cloud is that inaccessible light in which God is said to dwell.* This cloud, on account of its wondrous and surpassing brightness, is invisible; and, on account of the immense abundance of the supernatural light flowing from it, it is inaccessible.

"To this he attains, and into it he is absorbed, who has merited to know and to see God; for, by the very fact that he neither sees nor knows him, he is more intimately united to him who surpasses all sight and knowledge, knowing him to be above all which is the object of sense or intellect, and declaring with the prophet: *Thy knowledge is become wonderful to me: it is high, and I*

* *He dwelleth in light inaccessible* (1 Tim. vi 16; Ecclus. xliii 29, etc.).

*cannot reach it.** In this way that wonderful man, St Paul, writes that he knew God, at the same time that he knew him to be above all knowledge and comprehension, and therefore cried out: *O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgements and how unsearchable his ways!*† He also testifies that the graces of God are unspeakable and that his peace surpasseth all understanding. For him had he found, who is above all, and him did he know in a way exceeding all human understanding. He, who is the maker of all, in his own nature surpasses all things."

3. Oh, how holy is that soul which, visited in a wonderful way by God, and exalted by him above all created things, and even above all working of its own, has been purified in the memory from all images, and experiences perfect purity and simplicity! In the intellect it perceives the exceeding bright illuminations of the Sun of Justice, and apprehends the divine truth; and in the will experiences a certain heat of calm love, the spiritual contact of the Holy Ghost, as of a living fountain, flowing with streams of eternal sweetness, and thus is invited and introduced into union with God, the most excellent of all goods. Oh, happy is that hour!

* Ps. cxxxviii 6. † Rom. xi 33.

For then, indeed, the soul enjoys a supernatural festival of intense gladness and refreshing joy within itself, and in some sort has a foretaste of the future happiness.

Oh, how happy is he to whom the most fragrant spring and most lovely summer arises, and to whom it is vouchsafed to feel, if only for a moment, the touch divine! For he is then brought to that which neither reason nor intellect can take in, nor tongue of man express.* Through wise ignorance and through the inward touch of love he knows God better than his outward eyes know the visible sun. To that degree is he established in God, and he feels God more nearly united to his soul than he is to himself.

As the result of this union he now leads a godlike life, raised above all things; he becomes conformed to Christ in spirit, mind and body. Whether he eats or drinks, whether he watches or sleeps, God ever works in him, and in a most sublime way lives in him.

To such a soul God himself teaches all things, and opens his spiritual and hidden senses. Very often, yea, almost continually, doth he deign to visit him, to draw him to himself, to imprint upon him the kiss of

* God can never be comprehended by the human mind, though he can be partially known (*Summa*, I, qu. xii, art. 7).—TRANSLATOR.

love,* to illumine, enkindle, penetrate and fill his soul.

For since his soul is now a bright mirror, without the slightest tarnish, and in a position to catch easily the rays of the divine Sun, that divine Sun of Justice cannot but pour forth upon it continually streams of grace, rays of wisdom and bright flashes of charity.

In a most sublime and wonderful way, indeed, doth God sometimes reveal and manifest himself to a perfect soul, though still he doth not show himself as he is, face to face, in his unspeakable glory, but only so far as in this life he is able to be seen.

SECTION III

CERTAIN ADMONITIONS THAT MUST BE FAITHFULLY OBSERVED ABOUT THIS STATE OF UNION

1. What things chiefly promote and what impede this state of union.
2. The greatest moderation and discretion are needed in the endeavour after high contemplation.
3. Divine visitations are to be received humbly and with much wisdom.
4. Union must not be abused by seeking in it our own delight; nor on account of it must the soul neglect the duties of its calling in life.

1. OBSERVE well, a soul cannot arrive at this intimate union with God unless it hath be-

* *Cf.* Cant. i 1.

come entirely pure and simple, and thus hath a likeness to God.

In order, therefore, that it may deserve to be united to God, it must preserve itself as far as is possible from all sin, from all pleasure indulged for its own sake, and become free in heart and mind from everything created. The soul should therefore earnestly beg of God to make it as pure and free from disorderly affection as on the day on which it was born again in the waters of holy baptism, for then can God freely flow into the soul.

By true and deep humility the soul must always acknowledge itself to be most vile and unworthy, must always subject itself absolutely to the will of God, and keep itself raised up to him.

Grave sins and much immortification of self-will render us utterly unlike God, and are like thick walls separating us from him.* Yea, even a slight love and a weak affection which causes the soul to adhere somewhat to a mortal and created thing, a little idle word, or a morsel of food taken otherwise than it ought, and other minute offences and imperfections of this kind prevent God, who is purity itself, from being able to unite himself intimately to the soul till they have been expiated by repentance.

* *Cf.* Isa. lix 2.

Lastly, every image and thought of perishable things, yea, even a thought about the angels, or even of the passion of Christ,* and any intellectual reflection impedes a man in this mortal life when he desires to rise to mystical union with God, who is above all substance and all intellect.

At the moment, therefore, when God deigns to raise a soul to union with himself, holy thoughts and images of any kind, though at other times most useful to be received and entertained, are to be avoided and left, because they in some degree stand between the soul and God.

Wherefore, the spiritual man who desires to attain to this union, directly he feels himself vehemently inflamed and drawn upwards by the love of God, should cast out all images from the mind, and should betake himself to the Holy of holies, and to that internal silence in which there is no longer human, but only divine working; for then God acts, and man is passive.†

For, whilst the powers of the loving soul

* Compare the doctrine in Chapter VI.—TRANSLATOR.

† To avoid any suggestion of "Quietism" we must understand that, though the intellect is passive in the sense of not using the lower faculties, in not reasoning, it is in the fullest activity in its highest act—viz., contemplating the truth.—TRANSLATOR.

are silent and their own activity is stilled to rest and they are free from every image, God himself speaks, and influences the powers of the soul as he pleases, and accomplishes a most noble work in the soul.

But when the spiritual man feels this wonderful working of God no more, then should he quietly resume his own work and continue his spiritual exercises.

2. Besides this the spiritual man should notice that in his internal exercises of introversion and of turning to God, he should not make too violent a mental effort, lest if he were to attempt too high a flight he might err from want of simplicity, and be involved in interior darkness, from which usually arise intolerable miseries and anxieties.

He should therefore practise introversion with much simplicity, keeping down and blinding the eye of the intellect calmly but with diligence.

He should also prudently avoid a violent effort and strain of the mind, lest he should weigh down his natural powers and weaken himself too much.

If, however, he cannot always escape some internal trial and affliction, he must take heed not to be troubled, nor to let his soul despond; but he must bear this kind of tribulation with humility and patience, receiving it from the

hand of the Lord, and offering it to him for his eternal praise.

If he acts in this way, and perseveres with constancy in the exercise of inward prayer, at length he will be abundantly refreshed with heavenly manna, and sometimes will be completely satiated with it.

Some souls who exercise themselves in fervent aspirations to God feel often a great interior torture, until by the gift of God and by constant habit they attain to the knowledge of how to exercise themselves with simplicity and ease.

Many there are, also, who cannot bear even a slight sensible compunction without injury to themselves.

The spiritual man must earnestly avoid anything whatever that tends to destroy the peace and calm of his soul, but those impediments and hindrances that he cannot escape he should offer to God, as it has been already said, to his eternal praise.

3. When the soul receives some consolation from God, and is visited in an extraordinary way by him, and, filled with the light of grace, is carried beyond its natural light, care must be taken not to wonder too much at that which is experienced, and extravagant gestures should be restrained. Let the soul beware of searching too much into what God

is or in what way he is.* Neither should a man allow himself to speculate as to the nature of the light shining and radiating within his soul, but taking these things for what they are, without any curious investigation of the reason, he should repose on God alone, the unknown and the incomprehensible.

But lest he may feel any misgivings, he must know, when he rejoices in the abundance of internal light and consolation, that that light which illumines him in the essential base of the soul, and by means of which a man is led to acknowledge his own vileness and God's goodness, and thus to advance in true humility, is poured into him by God, not by the wicked spirit. That angel of darkness is indeed able to deceive vain and proud men by casting upon them a counterfeit light, and by exciting a false sweetness in their blood or heart; but, on the other hand, God only can enter into the mind or the essence of the soul.

4. The spiritual man must be careful not to seek in the true gifts of God his own pleasure, but the praise of God. He must not abuse God's gifts to indulge himself in

* *He that is a searcher of majesty shall be overwhelmed by glory* (Prov. xxv 27). Compare Ecclus. iii 22.

delight, for unworthy indeed would it be to mingle the unclean filth of his own pleasure with the precious balm of divine grace; but, dead to all gifts, this only must he desire, that God should be able to find in him delight, joy and peace, and should be able to take possession of him by the effect of his most gracious will. Ever should he be ready to be deprived of the consolations with which God refreshes him.

On the other hand, he should not try to fight against or to impede the gifts of God, but receiving them with a humble and grateful soul, he should be lost in admiration in considering the goodness of God in giving such things to one so unworthy.

In very truth it is a thing most excellent and joyful to rest with God in unity of spirit within the soul, but other good works are not to be abandoned on this account.* For the bee, as long as it rests on the flowers, makes neither honey nor wax. And what advantage is it, through the consolation of the divine visitation, to conceive in the spirit, unless it is followed by the birth of good works?

* What a lesson we learn from the fact that directly "the Word was made Flesh" our Blessed Lady, instead of remaining in her cell, in the delight of contemplation, immediately rose up and went a long journey of charity to visit her cousin, St Elizabeth, and to minister unto her.—TRANSLATOR.

The truth is, that what is most pleasing to God and most useful to man is persevering resignation in languor, barrenness, darkness and poverty of spirit.

It is further to be remarked that some people can better engage themselves with God and more easily remain in contemplation sitting than standing or kneeling.

If it should happen sometimes that the spiritual man, while deep in interior prayer, should be called away, or should be obliged to go away through obedience, he should not allow himself to be disturbed, but with prompt and cheerful obedience he should so do his external duties as not to leave his interior ones. For he ought always to deny himself, always to remain resigned, and to be ever ready for the will of God and the just desire of others and the needs of his neighbour to leave his accustomed exercises.

He must also take care, lest, by devoting himself, according to his own ideas, to the immoderate maceration and chastisement of his own body, he should raise an impediment to the grace and spiritual operation of God in himself.

SECTION IV

A FURTHER EXPLANATION OF THIS MYSTICAL UNION IN THE HIGHEST POINT OF THE WILL, THE APEX OF THE MIND, AND IN THE ESSENTIAL BASE OF THE SOUL, AND HOW FEW COME TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF IT

1. Of the admirable operation of the Trinity in the essence of the soul so united to him, and the liberty and beauty that come to the soul by this union.
2. The state of those souls who have truly arrived at this union through a kind of foretaste of everlasting happiness.
3. Few believe in, and fewer still have any experimental knowledge of, this essence or essential base or inner sanctuary of the soul.
4. What a benefit it is to know it, and in it to labour with all earnestness after union with God till that union be accomplished.

1. CONCERNING this divine union, which is accomplished in the apex or highest point of the mind, some fathers speak in the following terms:

When the highest point of the will or the highest affection is kindled with love, and the highest point of the intellect or the simple intelligence is illuminated from above, then the Blessed Trinity manifests himself: the Father in the memory, by the simple light of thought; the Son in the intellect, by clear knowledge; the Holy Ghost in the will by ardent love.

Hence the soul which contemplates that bright cloud or that dark light, leaving itself and flowing into God, is made one spirit with him in the inward essence of the soul and, generated* with the eternal Word of God, whom the heavenly Father there shows or brings forth, is renewed in a wonderful manner, and is rendered fit for every good work and exercise.

Therefore God the Father himself says of this soul: " This is my beloved daughter, in whom I am well pleased."

Rightly, therefore, doth one of the friends of God exhort the rational soul in the following words:

" O generous soul, keep thyself pure and free, for liberty is a precious treasure. Take care not to rove abroad to the multitudinous objects of the senses, but with restrained senses dwell within. Betake thyself into the most secret recess of thy soul and, turned to God with ardent love, plunge thyself into the very abyss of the Godhead a thousand times a day. For there, without doubt, wilt thou attain to the knowledge of uncreated beatitude. There wilt thou receive joy which

* This does not, of course, mean that the soul becomes the eternal Word, but shares the sonship by being made the adopted son of God. See 1 John iii 1.—TRANSLATOR.

will indeed be very great, though not yet perfect; for perfect joy, which will never be interrupted, will be given thee only in that heavenly country, where without ceasing thou shalt see God as he is."

Thus writeth that servant of God.

2. In very truth the soul immersed in God and absorbed into him swims, as it were, to and fro in the Godhead, and abounds with unspeakable joy which even overflows plenteously into the body. Now does the soul itself, even in this exile, enjoy a foretaste of eternal life.

(*a*) For it has its thoughts fixed on God, and, firmly bent on him, it goes ever deeper into its origin, remaining constantly before God. It possesses a certain supernatural unity of spirit in which it dwells as in its own tabernacle, and inclines itself into the divine essence, even to that supreme unity, where the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in the simplicity of the divine essence itself, are one.

The conversation, therefore, of this soul is in heaven*—that is, in the three Persons of the one Godhead. And when it is thus united to God in this excellent way, nothing is now to it as past or future, but it holds the eternal, and in that unchanging eternity, which is God, it hath all things, and it experienceth

* *Cf.* Phil. iii 20.

freedom from the order and distinction of images and forms. Thus the soul, raised above the intellect, flies back to its beginning and first principle, God, and there is made light in light.

Then, indeed, all lights that are merely natural or infused are quenched and rendered dark, for they have always shone below this light, in the same way as all the light of the stars is darkened and fails before the brightness of the blazing sun. For when the uncreated light arises created light vanishes. Therefore the created light of the soul is changed into the light of eternity.

(*b*) The state of these souls as to the mortification of their lower powers.

Those who are in this state of mystical union, and have conquered and mortified their nature and sensuality by the grace of God, have their soul now spiritually transformed; it has passed from temporal to spiritual life, and, after this, they are not moved in any inordinate way, either by prosperity or adversity, but enjoy a certain essential peace. For neither hope nor fear, neither joy nor sorrow, neither hatred nor love, that has in it anything sensual or inordinate, nor anything else that is in the least degree disturbing, is able to remain in them. For these loving souls are illuminated in full measure with

divine light, in which they know clearly what they should do and what leave undone.

(*c*) The state of those in mystical union in relation to other men.

For God's sake they willingly submit themselves to other men, they gladly obey all for God, with all their heart they choose the lowest place. They are not puffed up on account of the many excellent gifts which they have received, since they plunge most deeply into their own nothingness. They think nothing whatever of themselves, knowing well that it is God who works all the good they do. Constantly do they remain fixed in true humility and filial fear, and acknowledge that they are unprofitable servants.

(*d*) Their state of conscience.

All sin, not only serious but even the least, they most carefully avoid as far as is possible in this life. But those faults and negligences which come from human weakness they ever blot out and expiate by the Blood of Christ and by his passion and merits.

(*e*) What they do as to ordinary exercises.

Their own employments and customs, which formerly they had undertaken, they now abandon, because they know not how to retain any exercise of their own will, since they are not their own but belong to Christ.

Moreover, they remain hidden from the

world; nor, for the most part, doth anyone easily notice or perceive how truly Christian their simple and heavenly conversation is, unless, perhaps, those who have received the same grace of union; for they are not accustomed to adopt any singular or strange ways that can be noticed by strangers.

They are gentle and kind in daily life, and show an affable and sociable manner to all so long as no sin is involved. They appear not very severe; but are kind, and show to all an affectionate compassion. Whence it seems as if they could not be separated from God, unless, perchance, they fail in humility, which God forbid.

(*f*) What others think of them.

The hidden children of God, because they use humble words of themselves and behave as if they were of no account, are often looked down upon by those who exteriorly have some appearance of sanctity. Moreover, they are also often despised by those who are very rigid and trust chiefly in the external austerity of their life, practised according to their own will. Such men despise the hidden servants of God because they allow themselves some rest and other necessary things in a reasonable way, for the honour of God, in order that the body may be better able to serve the spirit.

But God takes more pleasure in one such

soul than in many other men who are not intimately united to himself.

3. Few men rise above their own natural powers, and no one certainly by his own effort is able to do so, for God only can lift a man, persevering in humble prayer and doing what in him lies, above himself.

Few, indeed, ever come to any experimental knowledge of the highest affection and simple intelligence, the highest point of the spirit and the hidden essence of the soul.

Not only so, but it is almost impossible to persuade many men to believe that this hidden essence of the soul exists in us at all. For it is far more interior as well as more sublime than the three higher powers, the memory, intellect and will, for it is the source of these powers.

It is entirely simple, essential and one in itself. Therefore, in it there is no multiplicity but unity, and the three higher powers are here united in one.

Here there is perfect rest, complete silence, because no image is able to penetrate into this sanctuary.

We ourselves, in this inner sanctuary of the soul, in which the divine image lies hid, are like unto God. This same hidden essence of the soul, which tends or stretches out to a certain abyss, is called " the heaven of the

spirit"; for in it is the kingdom of God, according to the words of our Lord: *The kingdom of God is within you.**

But the kingdom of God is God himself with all his riches.

This detached essence of the soul, therefore, free from all images, is lifted up above all created things, and above all the senses and powers; it is above place and time, remaining constant in cleaving to God, its beginning. It is, therefore, essentially within us, because it is the abyss of the soul and its intimate essence.

This deep and hidden essence of the soul, upon which the uncreated light continually shines, when it begins to open itself to the knowledge of a man and to let its light be seen by him, exceedingly moves and attracts him.

4. O noble essence of the soul, the divine temple from which God never departs! O most excellent sanctuary in which the Holy Trinity abides and in which eternity itself is tasted!

One perfect turning to this secret essence of the soul and to God himself is of more value than many other different exercises and works, and is able to make up for the lost opportunities of ten or many more years.

* Luke xvii 21.

For without doubt the fountain of water,* springing up into life everlasting, gushes forth plentifully in this secret essence of the soul, which water is of such efficacy and sweetness that it can easily cast out all the bitterness of vice, and can without difficulty conquer and overcome all the rebellion of nature. For as soon as it has been drunk it flows through every part of the soul and body, giving a wonderful purity and a marvellous fecundity to both.

We ought not, therefore, to cease from prayer until we are found worthy to drink of the waters of this fountain. For if we can taste but one little drop of it, we shall no longer thirst for vain things and failing creatures, but for God alone, for the love of God alone. The more we grow in this love, the more shall we increase in divine union; and the more perfectly we become united to God and the deeper we are immersed in him, the more clearly shall we know him in himself and through himself; while, again, the more clearly we know him, the more ardently shall we love him.

Some souls later, some earlier, arrive at that fountain of living water, and are in an excellent

* *The water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting* (John iv 14).

manner illuminated by supernatural light. Certain chosen souls God brings very quickly to perfection, and these he often, by a sudden grace, draws so strongly to himself that they cannot resist.

Blessed is he who, even after many years of continual labour and constant digging, at last deserves to find the spring of living waters in the secret essence of his soul.

Surely it is no wonder if a man must keep a long watch outside the presence-chamber of the eternal King; he cannot complain if he has to knock often and wait long before he can be admitted within.

May God, the uncreated abyss, deign to call to himself our spirit, the created abyss, and to unite it to himself, in order that our soul, absorbed into the most deep sea of the Godhead, may happily lose itself in the Spirit of God. In this union the object and end of all spiritual exercises, of all the sacred writings and of all instructions will be reached and obtained.

This book is now ended, and I submit what I have written to the judgement of our Holy Mother the Church and of the orthodox fathers. In the faith of Holy Church I desire to live and die to the glory of God, who is blessed for ever and ever. Amen.

TWO APPENDICES

To the "Book of Spiritual Instruction" of Blosius

Taken from the Works of Doctor John Tauler, O.P., and other Fathers.

With the appendix to the Book of Spiritual Instruction *Blosius wrote the following letter to his friend, Florentius :*

"The love I bear you, my dear Florentius, made it possible for you to extort from me that Book of Spiritual Instruction which I had gathered for my own use from the holy fathers; and God, as I hope, willed that I should send it to you. Now, both you and I ought to strive to improve every day in spiritual and interior life, and to draw nearer and nearer to the Lord. For myself I am indeed ashamed that I am still so far distant from perfect self-denial and mortification, and from the perfect love of God. May the most merciful Jesus deign to help my resolution and my endeavour.

"However, I am comforted by the words of a certain friend of God, speaking thus to our Lord himself: 'I will love thee, O Lord,

according to thy gift and my measure. If I cannot love thee as I ought, I cannot after all love thee beyond my power. But I shall be able to love thee better when thou shalt deign to bestow more love upon me, though never shall I be able to love thee as thou dost deserve to be loved. Thine eyes have seen my imperfect being;* nevertheless "In thy Book all shall be written, who do what they can, though they cannot do what they ought."'

"These words, I repeat, bring some comfort to my tepid soul dragged down to earth amid so many defects. Most earnestly do I hope that everyone who may read that instruction with a pious mind, if, indeed, others besides you will ever read it, may draw from it the fruit of salvation, and by their prayers may help my dull and unprofitable soul before God. The appendix, added to the same 'Book of Instruction,' I have drawn almost entirely from different places in the works of Doctor John Tauler. I have not always quoted his exact words, but I have taken care to give the sense of what he writes.

"Before I had compiled the 'Book of Spiritual Instruction' I wrote a short defence of Tauler against the injurious attacks of

* *Cf.* Ps. cxxxviii 16.

Eck.* I send it to you; you can add it to my little book.

"Farewell in Jesus, our Lord.

"LIESSIES,

"*The day before the Nones of October*, 1551."

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* Eck was a learned Swedish writer, who, though a Catholic and an opponent of Luther, attacked some of Tauler's mystical writings. Blosius shows that Eck misunderstood Tauler.—TRANSLATOR.

THE FIRST APPENDIX

CHAPTER I

THE JOYFUL BEGINNING OF INTERNAL LIFE. THE TEMPTATIONS AND AFFLICTIONS THAT FOLLOW. ULTIMATE PERFECTION AND ADMIRABLE UNION

1. An incredible pleasure follows the perfect renouncing of all things at the first entrance into a spiritual course.
2. This joy often breaks forth from the inmost heart, and shows itself in words and actions and in ecstasy.
3. But to this joyful beginning desolations often succeed, in which resignation is necessary.
4. If these crosses should be patiently borne, union of soul with God may follow; in which union the soul must not seek its own delight, but the good pleasure of God.
5. For only in the will of God is there solid consolation; and the most secure way to perfection is to resign ourselves truly to that will—a truth illustrated by examples.

THE renowned and sublimely illuminated theologian, Doctor John Tauler, of the Order of St Dominic, speaking in many places of his works about a soul that follows the interior life, thus says in substance:

1. He who feels an ardent desire to lead an interior life must examine himself diligently

in order to pare and cut away everything, whether in conversation, love, intention, words, works, clothes, ornaments, friends, comforts, pleasures, customs, that he may find an hindrance, preventing God from living and working in him; anything, in a word, of which God is not the true cause. After having broken down all these obstacles and cast them entirely away, he will probably experience a marvellous internal sweetness and pleasure in his soul. This joyous and most delicious fulness of spirit and of internal consolation surpasses and exceeds every joy the world can give.

2. Some who have thus delivered themselves from all that stood between them and God, when they carefully consider the sweet signs of that surpassing love which God so wonderfully manifests to us, both in heaven above and on earth below, and when they remember the innumerable benefits which he bestows upon all his creatures, are filled with the utmost joy of soul.

When they reflect that all things derive their life from God, flourish in him, and are filled with him,* and that the incomprehensible goodness of God pours forth the richest gifts on his creatures; when they consider how long God has borne with them, sought them,

* *Cf.* Jer. xxiii 24.

invited them, admonished, and waited for them; when they call to mind how he became man for us and suffered so much for our sakes, and offered his own most sacred life and soul as a sacrifice for us; when they consider how unspeakably intimate is that union with himself to which God calls us, and that the ever-blessed Trinity desires us to enjoy for ever the possession of the Godhead itself, and for this very reason has waited for us with such long-suffering; when they contemplate with love these marvellous—yea, stupendous—works of God, the unspeakable gifts he has bestowed, and the outpourings of his secret goodness, they experience such intense joy of mind, and are filled with such exultation of soul that the weak body is not able to bear it. Whence it often comes to pass that this joy breaks forth in words or certain external gestures, and if they had not this vent, blood, as has often happened, might break forth from the mouth, and they might run a risk of serious injury.

In this way, indeed, they are inundated in their inmost souls with plenteous sweetness from God, are joined to him by the internal embrace of love in sensible union, and receive from him most sweet spiritual embraces of love.

No one ought to be allowed to interfere with

them when they thus give external signs of the internal fire of love; they must be kindly borne with, and it is even sometimes prudent to give them the holy Eucharist in a private place, if it can be managed, lest people, ignorant of their state, might be offended at their unusual gestures.

On the other hand, those who enjoy the special gifts of God, and are compelled thus to exhibit their inward exultation by words and gestures, ought to aspire to higher things, and to control these exterior signs as much as possible.

These souls sometimes also suffer a certain stupor or ecstasy of mind on account of the overwhelming grace that they feel, and they see wonderful things in visions and images.

All this, however good, is not the best. For that sensible union which is effected in their nature, with some medium between them and God, is good indeed; but incomparably better is that true union which perfect men experience within the essence of their souls, without any sensible medium between themselves and God.

3. After a soul has become really detached from all things, has ceased to be a child in the spiritual life and has been abundantly strengthened by the refreshments of the divine sweetness, then God begins to provide a more

solid food, treating the soul as a grown man who has come of age in the spiritual life.

As a full-grown man it is certainly fitting that he should no longer have milk to drink,* but solid food suited to the robust. It is necessary that he should be taught to abandon the trifles of childhood,† to work, and to gain his living by the sweat of his brow, and to bear the full force of heaven's storms.

God, therefore, proposes to him to walk along a wild, dark and desert path,‡ and deprives him of all the gifts he before enjoyed, or at least hides them from his sight. In this state the soul seems entirely left to itself, so that it feels as if no knowledge of God remained. All spiritual exercises, all that is done or left undone, are alike utterly without savour, and the soul itself *slumbers through weariness*.§ So wandering is the mind that it can scarcely remain for one moment attentive to a pious and holy thought. If the soul recollects itself and turns to God, it seems at once repelled and cast off. Time seems utterly lost; and in everything, however good in itself, the soul seems in its own sight to displease its heavenly Spouse, and fears that in everything it is only laying up for itself terrible punishment for the life to come.

* *Cf.* 1 Cor. iii 1. † *Cf.* 1 Cor. xiii 11.
‡ *Cf.* Ps. lxii 3; xxii 4. § *Cf.* Ps. cxviii 28, 82, 83.

In the beginning of his conversion, God, desiring to attract his affection to himself, frequently visited him with illuminations of grace. As a bird-catcher baits a trap to entice the bird he desires to capture, so does God allure the soul to himself by often kindling within it the gentle flame of his love, and giving it a taste of his sweetness, at the same time drawing the will so strongly that whatever God wills the soul also wills.

But now God adopts a completely different treatment, puts on an austere and strict appearance, and leads the soul by difficult and rough ways.

Thus left to itself and deprived of all comfort, though not really of love and grace, the soul experiences in itself a terrible rebellion, and feels weighed down so completely that it knows not whether it ever was, or is now, in the grace of God at all. It is hemmed in with such bitter grief that the wide world seems too narrow. It feels not God, it knows not God, and yet nothing else can delight it or give it any pleasure. It seems, therefore, to be hanging between two dead walls, and on neither hand can it find any rest. In these straits it knows not whither to turn or what to do, except only to sit down and say: "Hail, bitterness most intense, full of every grace!"

Certainly, if hell were in this life possible,

it would seem to be more grievous than hell itself, thus to love God intensely and yet to feel as if entirely separated from the beloved.

But this is not all, for at the same time most foul and bitter thoughts fill the mind; vices that before appeared conquered assume new strength, and this in a way more troublesome than formerly, when the soul was under their yoke.

Moreover, this trial is greater at the more sacred times and on more solemn festivals; and on those days when the soul would feel more devout, it is so weighed down that it cannot recite one Our Father or Hail Mary without distraction.

At the same time God may allow the whole life and conversation of this afflicted soul to be ridiculed by many as a mere vain delusion, in order that the man may be despised and looked down upon by those even who are good and have an appearance of exterior holiness.

O thou, whoever thou mayest be, who thus mayest suffer, do not, I beseech thee, turn aside to vain comforts, but be faithful to thy heavenly Spouse. *Do ye manfully, and let your heart be strengthened.** Behave aright, for most certainly thy God is very near thee.

Only lean strongly on the support of lively

* Ps. xxx 25.

faith. Most undoubtedly it will soon be better with thee. All will turn out well.

But why do I speak thus? For in this state of desolation and misery it is impossible to persuade a man, so long as he remains in this lamentable state of affliction, in the valley of the shadow of death, that this intolerable obscurity and internal darkness can ever change into light.

But it is absolutely necessary, if he desire to enjoy true peace, to be resigned in this state of desolation, weighed down to the earth under the cross in utter poverty of spirit, and to keep his soul free and detached from all internal delights.

He must, therefore, prostrate himself completely in spirit before the most gracious will of God, ready to bear this suffering as long as God sees fit.

Whatever he may feel, the truth is that he has God present with him much more truly and usefully during this severe spiritual winter, than he ever had before in all the summer of joyful consolation. He ought to prefer this exercise of tribulation to all the delightful blandishments of divine grace which he before enjoyed.

It is important to observe that, during this time in which the Lord is trying him by these afflictions, he ought to eat and drink enough to

strengthen his bodily powers to endure the cross.

This trying state may be traced to various causes: sometimes it is the result of some natural indisposition; sometimes it is due to the weather; sometimes it is the action of the evil spirit; but whatever may be the source he must take it from the hand of God, by whose permission it happens.

If a man be not resigned when he is thus chastised with severe strokes by the hand of God, he will think that all is lost, and in a horrible state of grief and despair he will exclaim: "All is over with me! I have lost all light! All grace has been taken away from me!"

On the other hand, he who wishes to enjoy essential truth within himself ought to strive to arrive at such a degree of resignation that, with a calm spirit, he can suffer the loss of the sensible feeling of God, of himself and of all created things, remaining all the time in true peace within his soul.

Blessed indeed is he who, afflicted by grievous pains, does not stop to inquire whence they come, but is ready to bear them to the end and to the utmost degree, not desiring to come down from the cross until God shall free him and take him down with his own hands.

Happy, in good truth, is he who so plunges into the abyss of the divine good pleasure, and so resigns himself to the terrible and hidden judgements of God that he would be ready to remain in these pains and trials, not only for a week or a month, but even to the last day of judgement, or even for ever; not refusing to undergo the torments of hell itself, if this were the will of God.

This resignation, indeed, far exceeds all other acts of resignation. Compared to this it would be nothing to be willing to lose a thousand worlds. Even to give up life itself for God, as the holy martyrs did, is little, compared to this act of resignation. For the martyrs, overflowing with divine consolation, considered all their pains as mere child's play, and most gladly welcomed death. But to lack all sense of God within the soul incomparably exceeds all pains.*

* Blosius often speaks in his works of this most excellent degree of resignation for time and eternity, going so far even as to include the torments of the lost in the fires of hell. The words of St Paul, *I wished myself to be an anathema from Christ for my brethren* (Rom. ix 3), are thus explained by St Thomas with the usual clearness of the great doctor. "*I wished myself to be an anathema from Christ, for my brethren.* We should first understand," says St Thomas (*in loco*), "what the word anathema means. It comes from two Greek words, ἀνά (above) and θέσις (position); and so anathema means hung up or placed

4. The object God has in view in thus trying a man is to prepare his soul abundantly, by many crosses, for the reception of graces

above. For instance, if a thing taken in battle was not to be used, but kept as a trophy, it was hung up in a temple. And so the custom arose of calling those things separated from the use of men 'anathema'" (Jos. vi 17). To explain this more fully we must notice that there are two words, "anathēma" with a long "e" (ἀνάθημα) and "anathĕma" with a short "e" (ἀνάθεμα). The first means a thing dedicated to God in a good sense, denoting a thing consecrated to the service of God. This is the word used in Luke xxi 5 of the goodly stones and gifts, consecrated to God.

The second form, anathema, means a thing devoted to God for destruction. This is the word used in Lev. xxvii 28, 29, and in Deut. vii 26. St Thomas proceeds to explain the meaning of the Apostle. St Paul says, "I desired to be an anathĕma from Christ for my brethren," that is, separated from him, which can be understood in two senses. In one sense the words would mean separated from him by sin, by which a man is separated from the love of Christ through not keeping his commandments: *If you love me keep my commandments* (John xiv). Now, in this sense the Apostle could not possibly desire to be separated from Christ for any reason whatsoever. This would be against the right order of charity, by which a man is bound to love God above all things, and to desire his own salvation more than the salvation of others.

The second way in which a man may be separated from Christ is not to enjoy the "fruition" of Christ (that is, the delight that flows from the sight and

of a high order. For the truth is that these painful trials prepare the soul for the more excellent graces better than any other exercises.

At length God, seeing that his servant behaves in a worthy manner under these difficulties, bearing his afflictions and desolations patiently, comes himself to him, and pours himself into the inner sanctuary of his soul, which nothing lower than God can satisfy, and unites himself to his soul without any medium, filling him abundantly with good above all other good, which is himself. From the secret base or sanctuary of the soul he flows over all its faculties.

In this way God bestows himself most abundantly on the human soul, and this gift utterly exceeds anything that man could possibly have desired, and the soul, melting with love, flows in turn into its origin, God.

The soul is carried away into the loving and infinite abyss of the Godhead, into the cloud of the divine solitude which surpasses all understanding and all reason. Entering

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possession of Christ) in glory. In this sense was the Apostle willing to be separated from Christ for the salvation of the Gentiles, as well as for the conversion of the Jews (Phil. i).

See also *Summa*, II-II, qu. 27, art. 8, and II-II, qu. 182, art. 2.

into a state of simple contemplation, above all images formed in the mind, leaving himself and the working of his own intellect, his mind is now free from all distracting images, and is so far become one with God that it is not so much he that acts, as God who acts in him.

In fact, so completely is he carried above his nature that what God is essentially, by his own nature, that he becomes by grace. For although he does not cease to be a creature, he is made quite divine and godlike.*

Entirely consumed by the fire of love, he dies, but when he is thus dead and reduced to nothing, the Father is made manifest to him with the Word and the Holy Ghost.

In this union a man perceives that he has lost himself, and never acknowledges, finds or feels himself, for he knows nothing save only the one most simple essence, which is God.

For in this union the created spirit is liquefied, and is immersed in the uncreated Spirit and entirely absorbed by him.† Now, therefore, he finds nothing there save the pure Godhead and essential unity.

In this union, again, God delivers the afflicted man from all his anxieties and straits, and wonderfully illumines him, there having

* *Cf.* 2 Pet. i 4.

† Without, however, losing his own identity.

fallen from the interior eyes of his soul, *as it were, scales.**

In this intimate union is given to the soul a most clear knowledge of its own nothingness; all its debts and sins are forgiven; true peace, true joy and true steadfastness in prayer are bestowed upon it.

In the soul of that man who has thus been made one with God, God himself works without ceasing, and for this reason his works are more valuable than the works of any others who are not united in the same way to God, since they are the works of God, who is better than all.

When God, therefore, sees a desolate soul overwhelmed with trials, he does what we read of King Assuerus doing. For of Assuerus we read (Esther xv 10) that "when he lifted up his countenance . . . the queen sank down, and her colour turned pale, and she rested her weary head on her handmaid"; he stretched out his sceptre to her, "and in all haste and in fear he leaped from his throne, and holding her up in his arms till she came to herself, he kissed her, and promised he would give her whatsoever she should ask, even if it were the half of his kingdom."

Assuerus presents us with a type of the heavenly Father, who, when he sees a beloved

* Acts ix 18.

soul with a pale countenance—detached, that is, from every created comfort, fainting in spirit and bowing down—extends towards her the golden rod or sceptre; and rising, so to speak, from his throne, receives that soul to the divine embrace of love, and lifts it up above all weakness; and in the divine arms such and so great things come to the human spirit that they cannot be expressed in words.

By the stretching forth of the sceptre is understood the gift made by God the Father of his only Son; by the kiss is signified the pouring in of the supreme and incomprehensible sweetness of the Holy Ghost.

He also divideth his kingdom with the soul thus united to him, for he giveth such a soul the fullest power over heaven and earth, yea, even over himself, so that he maketh her mistress over all those things of which he is Lord.

But in none of these things doth the soul rest, seeking in them her own satisfaction, for so perfect is her mortification that in nothing doth she seek her own convenience or interest, but in all things the good pleasure, praise and honour of God.

So pure is now the intention that, although the soul may realize the fulness of God's gifts to her, the will is just as ready to lose them as to enjoy them.

And in fact God does sometimes actually take away, as before described, his excellent gifts from those whom he has brought to perfection, and has united closely, without any medium, to himself, and leaves them in such poverty that you would think they had never received anything at all from him. They are then like one hanging between heaven and earth, or between time and eternity, for they despise the earth and yet cannot attain unto heaven.

Besides this, God allows them to be afflicted with numberless temptations, and to be despised by many, while they are at the same time harassed by persecutions; but in all these troubles they remain humble and resigned, thinking themselves worthy of all contempt and oppression.

5. Various examples.

(1) An example to show that consolation must not be sought from angels, or any other creatures, but from God only. God revealed to a certain friend of his, by internal illumination, the meanings of all the holy scriptures, and showed him how men were living at that time, and how the works of some that appeared great before men were nothing in the sight of God, and that, on the other hand, the works of others that were considered by men as of no value were great in the sight of God.

Other wonderful things also did almighty God make manifest from time to time to his servant.

But on his part, the holy man thus prayed to his Lord, saying: "O most kind God, I desire none of these favours; take them from me, I beseech thee, for they torment me much."

God therefore took away from him all these wonderful favours, and for the space of five years left him without any consolation, in great temptations, anxieties and calamities. Now it came to pass that, while he was once weeping abundantly in the anguish of his heart, two angels desired to comfort him, but he said to the Lord:* "O Lord my God, I ask for no consolation. This alone entirely satisfies me, if thou wilt grant me grace to keep that place in my soul in which thou dwellest, so that none other may enter, or even appear there." After these words light unspeakable shone around him, and the voice of the Lord spoke to him, saying: *I will show thee all good.*† Most happily was he then immersed in the abyss of the Godhead.

(2) An example showing that resignation

* Thus also did St Mary Magdalen refuse the consolations of angels when seeking Christ (John xx 12).—TRANSLATOR.

† Exod. xxxiii 19.

to the good pleasure of God is the fountain of true comfort.

A certain holy virgin on one occasion was overwhelmed with such inexpressible weight of affliction that she seemed to herself to feel the very torments of hell. She turned with her whole heart to God, and said: "O most sweet Lord, my God, remember, I beseech thee, and mercifully consider that I am thy poor creature, but thou, the everlasting God, art my Lord and my Creator. Behold, I cast myself into the depths of thy most equitable judgement, and resign myself to thy most gracious will, in time and eternity, and I am ready to suffer this torment that I feel, like to hell itself, for ever, if it so please thee. Whatever thou, my heavenly father, desirest to do in me and with me, do thou; for I offer and give myself utterly, with all the humility I can, to all things thou willest, in time and eternity."

After this act of resignation that virgin was presently rapt above all created things, and was immersed and absorbed into the loving abyss of the Godhead.

O thrice happy absorption! From that time forth was she every day carried away in spirit into that same divine abyss.

(3) An example showing that to endure the bitterest trials for God is the most certain way to the perfection of the divine union.

Another virgin, who had attained to a wonderful degree of holiness, when she was asked by what exercises she had come to perfection, humbly answered thus: "However much I have been overwhelmed with sorrows and trials, I have always desired to bear greater for the love of God, judging myself unworthy of such singular gifts of God. I have dwelt among angels and saints, who are as familiar to me as his own family is to a man. As often as I betake myself to the inner sanctuary of my own spirit, I find in myself the image of the most high Trinity, in which I find myself and all creatures one with God."

(4) Example showing the best method of bearing trials.

Again, another virgin of very holy life answered one who asked about trials as follows: "I have always received every adversity calmly from the hand of the Lord. If anyone did me any ill turn, I have always taken care to repay him by some special benefit, which I should not have done him unless I had received the injury. To no one have I ever complained of trials, except only to God, and therefore from the beginning have I received from the same Lord consolation and strength. I give thanks to him who in his mercy has been pleased to lift me above all

created things, and to admit me to the peaceful enjoyment of himself and to an unspeakable union with him."

(5) In like manner a poor mendicant of perfect life, asked by a theologian how he had reached such perfection, replied in some such words as these: " I determined to cleave to the divine will alone, into which I have so fully poured forth my own will that whatever God wills, that I also will. When I suffer hunger and thirst, I praise God; whether the weather be fine, wet or stormy, again I praise God. Whatever he gives me or allows to come to me, whether it be prosperous or the contrary, whether sweet or bitter, I joyfully receive it from him as the best thing that could happen to me, resigning myself utterly to him with humility. In nothing less than God am I able to rest, and now I have found my God, in whom I have everlasting rest and peace."

CHAPTER II

OF THE MOTHER OF GOD, THE VIRGIN MARY, THE MIRROR AND EXAMPLE OF ALL HOLINESS

1. The Blessed Virgin loved God with the most perfect love, dwelt with him always in her own soul and in everything was conformed to him.
2. Her contemplation was in the highest degree.
3. Her exterior works in no way disturbed her inward union with God, for she was in the state of innocence, without original sin.
4. She heard the word of God most humbly, and with the most ardent desire.
5. She resigned herself entirely to every cross, in order to be conformed to her Son.
6. Her prayer was most pure; her conversation holy and full of prudence; the purity of her whole life angelical.

TAULER wrote many remarkable things about the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, a few of which are here produced:

1. The most blessed Mother of God, he says, the Virgin Mary, was full of every grace and of all virtues, the mirror and example of all holiness. For as long as she remained in this life she had such a perfect love for God, and entered and dwelt so entirely in the inner sanctuary of her soul, that she loved absolutely no created thing apart from, or except in, God. Her love of him was entire and undivided, and in him she loved all created things.

She habitually, therefore, retreated, with all her powers, into the inner sanctuary of her soul, in which the divine image lay hid; and there she abode, drawing all her powers into it, and obliging them to remain there, and adoring there the one only God in spirit and in truth.

She knew and confessed that she was not able to praise God worthily, and, therefore, she begged him to praise and magnify himself in her. The interior essence of her soul and all her powers, memory, intellect and will, were all godlike, so that if anyone had seen her soul, he would have seen there God in all his brightness and the very procession of the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Never once did her heart turn aside from God, even for one single brief moment. In perfect poverty of spirit she resigned herself completely to the most gracious will of God, with love presenting herself to him as a most fitting instrument to do all he pleased. Moreover, she offered herself to God constantly, with profound humility and contempt of herself, completely free from any tincture of self-seeking in desire, will or action. In fact, there was no more self-seeking in her soul than there was before she was created, and, therefore, God had always a perfectly free entrance into it.

2. When, therefore, she directed her mind to eternity, her soul was at once carried away into divine contemplation above all understanding, and this contemplation in the inmost essence of her soul was manifested by all her powers. For her memory, drawn into simple light, was firmly established in unity of spirit above all mere passing things of sense. Her intellect was penetrated by a most brilliant heavenly light, by which she easily learned, knew and understood distinctly all virtues, all kinds of spiritual exercises and all the hidden meanings of Scripture. Her will burned with a most devout flame of calm love, by which she was rapt above all created things.

In this wonderful elevation of mind, raised above all images and reasoning, she perceived in silence the gentle whispering voice of God and all his inspirations, and her spirit, completely raised above any action of her own, was filled to the full from the eternal fountain of uncreated wisdom.

Thus she always reposed entirely in God, and lost herself through the embrace of immense love in the infinite solitude and darkness of the Godhead, was united most intimately with God, without any medium, and was made one spirit with him—a union the excellence of which surpassed all other created gifts, graces and lights.

In this divine union, by means of the supernatural light which shone without ceasing in the inner sanctuary of her soul and in the highest point of her spirit, she saw that spiritual brightness, which is God, by intuition, and at the same time all created things by one simple act of the mind.

Made one with Light itself, she saw light in light;* she experienced a foretaste of the future beatitude, and loved God with eternal and inseparable love. In this kind of contemplation all created gifts, virtues and exercises were necessarily kept in subjection, for she was transfigured by the divine light above all reasoning and intellect.

And who can tell how many revelations of heavenly secrets the illustrious virgin, so

* *In thy light we shall see light* (Ps. xxxv 10). Tauler, in thus describing the fulness of grace bestowed on the soul of God's blessed Mother, must not be understood to imply that she, like her Son, enjoyed during her mortal life the beatific vision, at least habitually. This was the unique privilege of the soul of Jesus Christ, who alone was at once a *Comprehensor*, that is, a soul seeing God face to face by the light of glory, and a *Viator*, that is, a pilgrim on the way to the glory of heaven, but who has not yet arrived at that blessed state. But it may be that our Blessed Lady had on earth, by a miraculous action of God's grace, at times, the sight of the divine essence. See *Summa*, I, qu. 12, art. 11, ad 2, and II-II, qu. 175 art. 3.—TRANSLATOR.

wonderfully rapt above all things of place and time, received from God? She saw with unspeakable joy and delight the shining brightness of God and the ideas of all things as they are beheld in eternity. In fact, if all the joys of the world, all peace, all delights and pleasures were gathered into one, they would appear mere bitterness compared with the least joy that the Blessed Virgin possessed.

3. Besides all this the most excellent Virgin had another peculiar grace. Although so highly gifted with divine contemplation, she was, more than any other holy person, able to see all the things of this world, and to keep in order and govern her whole outer life with holy actions and conduct, without its being any hindrance to the perfection of her interior life of union with God.

For the highest powers of her soul were habitually turned completely to God, their origin, and were united to him, while the lower powers were entirely subjected to the higher, as was the case with Adam before he lost his first justice and innocence. This singular spiritual adornment came from the fact that she was entirely free from original sin, from which her Son preserved her. Never, for one instant of time, was she a child of wrath or a foul vessel of the devil, subject to his dominion, as was the case with

us. For this the eternal Wisdom prevented, not being willing to allow his own temple, chosen before all others, to be stained by the least defect.

Therefore, even when rapt in highest possible contemplation of the Godhead, she always attended to the outward praises of God and all that belonged to the divine worship, with the utmost zeal, immense devotion and profound humility of heart.

4. She always listened with the greatest devotion to the word of God, though announced in the simplest manner, and, although she herself understood God's teaching so much better and more perfectly than those who spoke, she pondered on what was said in her virginal heart, desiring intensely to carry into practice the least things as well as the highest.

5. When she reflected how the Son of God and her own Son, Jesus Christ, always exposed to contempt and suffering, ordered and directed his whole life with a view to afflictions and self-humiliations, she so offered herself for these same things that she never desired to shorten or lessen them. She endured even the bitterest trials with such loving subjection that she was prepared to remain in tribulations and sorrows for ever if God had so willed. Knowing that her Son bore his bitter passion

with absolute patience, not only without complaint, but with joy of spirit, on account of his burning love for us, she also gladly endured whatever she had to suffer with an ardent desire of love.

6. In her prayers she offered herself and all she had to God, and commended all into his loving hands, praying only that he would do his most gracious will in her. Never did she cleave to any gift of God with self-love, nor did she ever use the divine graces for the delight of her own spirit, but only for the praise of God. Never did she inordinately desire any wisdom or knowledge; nor did she, in the practice of virtue, ever seek any self-gratification, any more than she sought any pleasure in eating or drinking.

So pure was her soul that she was never affected by anything created in any way the least inordinate; never did she feel the slightest inclination to any vice, and in this way her purity shone with the brightness of the angels. Therefore, although the most beautiful of the children of men, she inspired all with none but the holiest thoughts, on account of her own angelical purity.

All her actions, even the least, she did with wonderful devotion to the honour of the almighty God. The beginning and end of everything she did or omitted was God

himself, for her intention in everything was so purely for God that it might be called divine.

Before she allowed herself to speak she used to enter into herself and consider whether the words were necessary, whether they would be without offence, and whether they would promote the glory of God. After this consideration she said humbly, gently and briefly what was necessary.

When she rested in sleep troops of angels encamped about her couch,* that no evil spirit might dare to approach; therefore she was never troubled by any vain phantasm or dream, and no imagination came,† except what was the result of the light shining from God, for the most blessed Trinity always and everywhere protected her.

Nor did the most pure Virgin ever compose herself to rest without offering her sleep, with ardent desires of love, to the honour of God.

* *Cf.* Ps. xxxiii 8.

† God was *her sun and her shield*—Ps. lxxxiii 12 (Hebrew text); in the Vulgate, *God loveth mercy and truth.*

CHAPTER III

PREPARATION FOR A HOLY DEATH, TO BE FOLLOWED BY ETERNAL HAPPINESS

1. Mortification of concupiscence and resignation of our own will are the best preparation for death.
2. He who is near to death should first ask the help of the saints; then he should unite himself to the merits of the passion of Christ; and lastly, he should resign himself to bear everything, however bitter it may be, to please God.
3. How easily even great sinners can obtain for themselves the grace of God, provided that they do not trust presumptuously in God's mercy.
4. A happy death and eternal beatitude follow a good life.

1. It is right that all should learn how to die, and by killing their sins should die again and again. To secure a holy death it is, above all, necessary to be diligent in putting to death our own will and concupiscences, or evil desires, during life. Such a death is a life-giving death. He who thus dies safely meets the death of the body, and welcomes it with joy, as the beginning of life.

No exercise can be more useful in our last hour than to resign ourselves utterly to the will of God, and to seek nothing of our own, but only the will of God, in time and for eternity.

For it is certain that anyone who goes out of this world in this state of pure and perfect resignation will fly immediately to the kingdom of heaven. As no kind of pain and no burning of the fire of purgatory can affect God, so neither can it affect a man who is perfectly united to God in conformity of will and love.

2. When a man feels the approach of death, he should prepare himself in the following way:

(1) He should have recourse earnestly and devoutly to the kind Mother of mercy, the glorious Queen of heaven, the Virgin Mary, and should call upon her and all the host of heaven.

(2) With firm and simple zeal should he adhere to the faith of the holy Catholic Church.

(3) He should trust in the merits of our Saviour Jesus Christ, rather than in any merit of his own. In order to do this, he should place before his soul the bitter passion and death of Jesus Christ, and he should call to mind that unspeakable charity which urged our Lord to suffer so many indignities for his sake, and he should take care to unite his spirit, his soul and his body to the Spirit, Soul and Body of the Lord Jesus himself. He should cast himself with all his sins and negligences into those open Wounds, and

immerse them all in the profound ocean of his immense mercy.

(4) To the supreme glory of God he should offer himself to the Lord himself, as a living victim, ready to bear patiently, according to his acceptable will and from true love, all the bitterness of languor and of death itself, and every pain which our Lord may will to send him in time and in eternity.

This, if he can really do it; if, I say, he shall offer himself from pure love, with perfect resignation of himself, to suffer every pain in honour of the divine justice with a tranquil and willing mind, in this disposition he will not undergo the pains either of hell or of purgatory, no, not even if he himself had committed all the sins of the whole world.

(5) In this disposition of mind did that righteous man, who had been a thief, die on the cross. He did not ask health of body from our Lord, nor did he pray to be delivered from the pains of hell or of purgatory, nor did he beg for the kingdom of heaven; but accepting his death willingly for the glory of God, in punishment for his sins, he resigned himself entirely to the will of God, offering himself wholly to Christ, that he might do with him whatsoever he willed. He asked for nothing except mercy and grace, saying:

*Remember me, O Lord, when thou shalt come into thy kingdom.**

(6) The following words, said in the hearing of the dying, are of great profit: "O Lord God, I am that miserable one, whom thou, in thy fatherly love, didst create, and through the most ignominious death of thine only-begotten Son didst redeem from the power of the enemy. Thou alone hast power and dominion over me, and canst save me according to thine immense mercy."

God himself has deigned to reveal to his friends that these words, suggested to the faithful when dying, or piously said by word, or in the mind, by those who are dying, are of wonderful efficacy; so much so that no one who has the Catholic faith can perish, if, in his last moments, with a truly sincere heart, he humbly says these words to God, or devoutly accepts them in his own mind.

3. A certain friend of God was once asked what he would do if he had lived for a long time in grievous sins. He replied: "If I had done all prescribed to me by a prudent and wise confessor, and had given up my sins as I ought, I should wish never again to think of them, nor to stain my heart with the remembrance of them; but I would strive from that time to live so piously that God might forget

* Luke xxiii 42.

all my sins. For when we neither desire nor commit sin, but turn clean away from it, then God also forgets it.*

"Yea, even if I had lived for the space of forty years in sins, and now the hour of my death had come, if I had sincerely confessed my sins, if I could, with perfect love, from the depth of my heart, even for the space of one 'Hail Mary,' turn myself to God and betake myself to him, in order that I might turn utterly away from sin and entirely to God, then I might go from this world as a pure and innocent man. But, if, on the other hand, I had committed only one sin, and I went hence in sorrow, contrition and grief of heart, then, indeed, I should die as a penitent sinner."

On the other hand, many people who have not the true fear of God are miserably deceived by flattering themselves with the idea of God's immense mercy, while at the same

* This advice is meant to guide the timid and scrupulous, who, after confession, ought to abstain from an anxious remembrance of particular sins, especially of blasphemy, impurity, and suchlike, which, once confessed, are far better forgotten, on account of the danger of despair and of relapse, and also to avoid trouble of mind and depression. But this does not exclude the penitent disposition of mind and humility for past sin in general. *My sin is ever before me* (Ps. 1 5).—TRANSLATOR.

time they do not correct their evil life. Such men think little of daily venial offences; yea, even grievous sins do not much trouble them. They say to themselves: "Directly we have sighed a little and groaned over our iniquities, the inexhaustible mercy of God will forgive them all, and we shall go hence by a happy death."

But this is a delusion; for we must remember that God, in the same way that he is infinitely merciful, is also infinitely just. He is not merciful without justice nor just without mercy, as the psalm says: *The Lord loveth mercy and judgement.** And again: *Mercy and judgement will I sing to thee, O Lord.*†

Wherefore he who desires to be saved ought to embrace and to kiss both of our Lord's feet—that is, the foot of his mercy and the foot of his justice. He ought so to trust in the infinite mercy of God as not to persevere in sin; but, turning to God with his whole heart, he ought to strive to live a righteous and godly life. Thus living, will he die at last a holy death.

Exceeding foolish are they who, in false security, live on willingly in their vices and negligences; for afterwards they will have to endure grave torments even for lighter sins not expiated in this world. For God will

* Ps. xxxii 5. † Ps. c 1.

require an exact account for all time spent uselessly, for all frivolities, vanities, idle gratifications and unruly affections. And for this reason he has himself warned us in the Gospel that *Every idle word that men speak they shall render an account for it in the day of judgement.**

He will not leave one fault, however small, without punishment, if it has not been expiated by penance in this world.

As an example, it is said that the sister of SS Cosmas and Damian suffered for the space of fifteen days in purgatory because she had indulged in idle pleasure in watching people dancing in the street.

And of another virgin consecrated to God it is related that because, in her last illness, she had taken food and other external comforts with a certain natural pleasure, it was necessary for her to be still further purified before she could enter the kingdom of heaven.

Moreover, we read that blessed Severinus felt the pains of purgatory, because, when much occupied with various affairs in the royal court, he had often said his office negligently.

It is wise, therefore, to fear the hidden judgements of God, and to humble ourselves most profoundly before the Lord, looking

* Matt. xii 36.

forward to the dissolution of our bodies and the hour of death.

4. The only safe way is to begin now, while we are in health, to do that good which we shall wish to have done in our last moments, for to put it off till death is dangerous and foolish in the highest degree. A holy death follows a holy life, and eternal happiness follows a holy death.

When we shall have obtained eternal life we shall see God face to face; we shall see him as he is. We shall know the unspeakable mystery of the glorious Trinity; we shall contemplate with unutterable gladness the glorified Manhood of Jesus Christ. We shall be united to God perfectly, and we shall taste with the utmost joy and for ever the sweetness of divine peace.

Never shall we be able to be separated from the sight, love and embrace of the Lord God himself. Without labour and without fatigue we shall praise him for ever.

We shall enjoy for ever the society of Mary, the Mother of God, most beautiful, most sweet, most kind, most lovable, of the holy angels and the other citizens of heaven, and we shall know them all right well as our friends.

Truly, that blessed heavenly country is our only fatherland; where an everlasting day

always shineth forth, better far than a thousand days here below.

That fatherland should we desire for a pure motive; seeking it, that is, more for the praise of God than for our own advantage.

May we be brought there by the mercy of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; to whom be praise, honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

APPENDIX II

CERTAIN EXERCISES ACCORDING TO THE ABOVE INSTRUCTIONS

1. Some who suffer from weakness of head, and some also who are very busy, often desire exercises that are short and not too wordy. This collection of prayers is, therefore, added to help them. In these prayers will be found collected together the aspirations and the internal petitions that should be made daily, and which have been treated more at length in the above "Book of Spiritual Instruction."

A beginner in the way of the spirit, who might find longer exercises a burden, may perhaps find delight in these shorter ones.

Aspirations for the Purgative Way

O good Jesus, good Jesus, good Jesus! O my hope, my refuge, my salvation, have mercy on me.

Have mercy, have mercy, have mercy!

I am poor and needy: I am nothing: I can do nothing.

Alas, how exceeding is my ingratitude! I am a most vile sinner. For I have sinned, I have sinned, I have sinned, and I have done evil in thy sight. Forgive me.

I cast all my iniquities and negligences into the abyss of thy mercy and thy merits. Oh, would that I had never offended thee! Would that I had never hindered thy grace within me!

I am resolved, by thy help, to amend. O Lord, be merciful to me; blot out all my sins. Wash me with thy precious Blood. Heal me with thy sacred Wounds. Make me holy by thy passion and death. Wash me, oh, wash me from all sin. Give me back that innocence I had in baptism, that I may be really pleasing to thee.

Aspirations suggesting Self-denial and Resignation

Behold, O Lord, here I am; behold, I put myself in the lowest place before thee, below every created thing.

I am unworthy to be on earth. I submit and subject myself to all men. I embrace all, yea, all with the most sincere love.

I abandon all passing things for the love of thee. I reject whatever is not thee.

I renounce all sensual pleasure. I renounce all vanity and impurity. I renounce all self-seeking.

I resign myself to thee; to thee do I resign myself, yea, entirely to thee. I unite my will completely to thine. Let thy will, O Lord,

be done in me and with me. May thy will be done, in time and in eternity. I offer myself to thee, ready to bear, with the help of thy grace, whatever may please thee.

Aspirations for the Illuminative Way

Ah, most sweet Jesus, mortify within me all that is bad; make it die. Put to death in me all that is vicious and unruly. Kill whatever displeases thee. Mortify within me all that is my own.

Give me true humility, true patience and true charity. Grant me the perfect control of my tongue, my senses and all my members. Adorn me with thy merits and virtues.

Prepare for thyself, for thyself only, a pleasing tabernacle, a delightful dwelling for thyself within me.

Renew my spirit, my soul and my body with thy grace. Conform me to thy sacred Manhood. Reform the faculties of my soul through the most holy faculties of thy Soul. Make me a man according to thine own Heart.

Oh, free my mind, with thine own freedom, from all slavery to sin and created things. Give me true simplicity of soul, that I may seek thee only. Enlighten my mind. Grant me grace to unite myself to thee in my soul without let or hindrance from created things.

Kindle within me the fire of thy love. Consume me in thy fire. Transform me, that nothing may live within me, save only thee.

Aspirations of Union

O my beloved, my beloved, my beloved!

O dearest of all friends, O my one love!

O spouse of my soul, flower of love! Spouse of my soul, sweeter than honey in the honeycomb! Ah, sweetness, sweetness, sweetness of my heart, life of my soul! O calm light of my inmost soul! O Lord, my God!

O most holy Trinity, one God, brighter than light, giving all delight, feed me, feed me; feed my soul with thy inflowing grace.

I adore thee; I praise thee; I glorify thee; for praise and honour are thy due for ever and ever.

O my God and my all! O abyss most sweet, most worthy of love! O good, most simple and most joyful, my true and unchangeable good, fill me with thyself.

O my tenderly beloved, draw me into the most secret sanctuary of my soul, that I may find thee there, and dwell with thee, my Creator; that thou mayest find thy delight in me.

Oh, when, when will the happy day come, in which I shall perfectly find thee? When

shall I love thee with ardent affection? When shall I be closely united to thee? Oh, when, when wilt thou carry me away utterly into thyself? When wilt thou completely absorb me into thyself? When wilt thou unite me to thyself in intimate union, without any medium between me and thee?

Remove, I beseech thee, all hindrances, and make me one spirit with thee, for the glory of thy name. Hear me, O Lord; hear me; hear my prayer, not to gratify my will, but for thy own good pleasure.

Teach me, I beseech thee; enlighten, direct and help me in all things, that I may do nothing, speak nothing, think nothing, will nothing, except what will be pleasing in thine eyes.

Aspirations to the Blessed Virgin and the Saints

O Mary, Mary, Mary, Virgin most sweet! O Mother of God; Queen of heaven; Lily of the Trinity; have mercy on me, a poor forlorn exile.

I salute thee, I salute thee, I salute and venerate thee. Obtain for me by thy prayers, I beseech thee, perfect self-denial and mortification. Obtain for me purity, a simple intention of pleasing God, detachment and

internal liberty of spirit.* Obtain for me the grace to dwell ever with God in my inmost soul, that I may be a man according to the Heart of thy Son.

O all ye saints of God, and ye blessed angels, pray for me. I salute you; I salute you; I salute and venerate you. Oh, obtain for me, by your prayers, full forgiveness of my sins, grace and union with God.

Aspirations for the Church and for the Whole World

O Jesus, most kind and merciful, have mercy on thy Church. Have mercy on all for whom thou hast shed thy most sacred Blood. Convert, oh, convert, convert all miserable sinners. Give to the living pardon and grace; grant to the faithful departed rest and light everlasting. Amen.

This is written for the humble, the little ones of Christ.

If anyone, wise with the wisdom of this world, should happen to read these things, he may perchance ridicule, scorn and despise them; but they have been written for the humble and the little ones of Christ.† The

* Liberty of spirit means that freedom from self-love that makes the soul prompt in doing God's will in the least thing.—Translator.

† *Cf.* Matt. xi 25, xviii 3; Luke x 21.

reason of the repetition of many of these simple aspirations is that the affections of the soul may be more excited, and the attention more easily maintained. Any of them can be repeated over and over again, according to the taste of each soul.

The Usefulness of Aspirations of this Kind and of Moderation in Them

A fervent young servant of God, who desired ardently to progress in his love, used very often to revolve in his mind these few simple words:

"O good Jesus, good Jesus, good Jesus! O Beloved, beloved, beloved! O my only Love! O my sweet Jesus! Have mercy; have mercy; have mercy on me. Make me pleasing to thee. Make me one spirit with thee."

Or these: "O Lord God! O beloved beginning! O abyss of love! O God, most simple and joyful, give thyself to me, and flow into my soul. Free me; free me, I beseech thee, free me from all things. Draw me into thyself. Absorb me utterly into thyself."

The beginner in the way of the spirit should learn loving aspirations of this kind, and should diligently ruminate upon them in his own mind; knocking thus with holy importunity at the door of the divine mercy, for

thus at length will he attain to perfection of life.

But at the same time he must take care to be prudent, and not, by immoderate effort or too intense application in repeating words, to weigh down and exhaust nature, and injure his brain.

He should learn also how to attend lovingly to the presence of God, and to occupy himself with him, without saying any words with his lips, but by practising himself in holy desires and internal affections.

He can also reflect upon the life and passion of our Lord Jesus, according to the method described in the eleventh chapter of the above Instruction, or by any other method that suits him better, for the glory of God, who is blessed for ever and ever. Amen.

First Exercise of Internal Prayer with the Most Holy Trinity*

I adore thee, O glorious, bright and ever-peaceful Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy

* Our progress in holiness consists, in great measure, in changing the conversation we are constantly carrying on with ourselves into conversation with God. These interior conversations within our souls are intended to help us to form this habit of interior conversation with God. They are not meant merely as pious vocal prayers.—Translator.

Ghost, one God; my hope, my light, my joy, my life and all my good.

I thank thee, O Lord, who didst create me after thine own likeness; hast mercifully borne with me a sinner up to this time; hast delivered me from many dangers, and bestowed on me countless benefits.

O loving Father, I offer up to thee, as a fully cleansing expiation and satisfaction for all my sins and negligences, and for the sins of all men, the most holy Incarnation, Birth, Life, Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of thy well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ. I offer up the labours, the hardships, the heaviness, the scorn, the blows, the wounds, and the griefs and anguish with which he was afflicted. I offer up the most precious Blood which he shed. I offer up his humility, patience, charity and innocence.

O Father, O Son, O Holy Ghost! My God, who art within me, grant that I may not be able to think anything, to will anything, to speak anything, or to do anything save what is pleasing to thee. Grant that I and all men may always do thy will. Make us all pleasing to thee, and one with thee, that thou mayest be able to find thy delight in us. I ought and I desire to praise thee, O Lord; but as I cannot do so as I ought, I pray thee to praise thyself perfectly in me. I pray thee, make

holy every breath that I draw, waking or sleeping, and most graciously receive them all as praise to thee.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

Second Interior Conversation with Jesus

I adore, praise and glorify thee, O Lord Jesus Christ; I bless and thank thee, Son of the living God, who, by the will of the Father, through the co-operation of the Holy Ghost, didst vouchsafe to be conceived in the most chaste womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and to become, for my sake, Man subject to suffering.

O good Jesus, with what immense and incomprehensible charity thou hast loved me! For thou, the Lord of highest majesty, didst empty thyself, and take the form of a servant. Thou, my God, didst become my Brother. What return can I make to thee for this loving-kindness and mercy? Behold I offer my soul and body to thine everlasting praise.

I thank thee for thy most sacred Birth; I thank thee for being born of the Virgin Mary in a stable, in the midst of the winter cold, as a tender Babe. Hail! Child most sweet. Hail! King of glory, Light of the nations, Saviour most desired, who for my sake didst not disdain to be wrapped in swaddling

clothes, tied with bands, laid on straw in the manger and fed with milk from the Virgin's breast.

I thank thee for thy painful Circumcision, for the appearance of the guiding star by which thou wast revealed to the Gentiles, for thy Presentation in the temple, for thy Flight into Egypt, and for all the wants and pains which in thy most holy Infancy, Boyhood and Youth thou didst endure.

I thank thee for thine adorable baptism, which thou, the Creator of heaven and earth, didst humbly receive from thy servant John; for thy fast of forty days and forty nights in the desert; and for the temptations with which thou didst not refuse to be assailed by the devil.

I thank thee for thy saving teaching; for the miracles and other benefits which thou hast shown to the world; for thy journeys, toils and hardships; for thy hunger and thirst; for the cold and heat thou didst suffer, and the manifold persecutions thou didst endure for my salvation for three-and-thirty years.

I thank thee for that wondrous act of humiliation, when thou, the meek Master, kneeling on the ground, didst so graciously wash the feet of thy disciples and wipe them with a towel.

I thank thee for the institution of the

venerable sacrament of the Eucharist, in which, with marvellous generosity and unspeakable charity, thou didst give and leave thyself with us.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

Third Interior Conversation with Jesus

I adore, praise and glorify thee, O Lord Jesus Christ; I bless thee and thank thee, Son of the living God, for the fear and sorrow, for the sweat of Blood and agony with which thou wast afflicted for my sake in the garden.

I thank thee for the most perfect self-denial with which thou didst fully resign thyself to thy Father, when, kneeling and falling flat with thy face on the ground, and praying in an agony, thou didst say: " Father, thy will be done."

I give thee thanks for the intense desire of suffering with which thou didst burn when, for love of me, thou didst offer thyself to thine enemies to be taken prisoner and bound.

I thank thee for enduring for my sake all the pushes, blows and wounds, all the reproaches, insults and blasphemies with which thou wert laden, when *thou gavest thy body to the strikers and thy cheeks to them that plucked them,** and didst suffer thyself to be led,

* Isa. 1 6.

bound as a robber, to the house of Annas and Caiphas.

I give thee thanks for allowing that most terrible blow which was most wickedly given thee, the King of kings and Lord of lords, by the servant of the high priest.

I give thee thanks for thy most gentle patience during the night of thy passion; for thine unjust condemnation to death; for "not turning away thy face from them that rebuked thee and spat upon thy royal countenance"; for thy humility in allowing them *to blindfold thee and smite thee on the face;** for all the buffets, mockeries and other injuries and afflictions thou didst endure for my sake.

I give thee thanks for the depth of ignominy thou didst suffer, when, bound as a malefactor, thou wast led in the morning to Pilate; from Pilate to Herod; and again from Herod to Pilate. O sweet Saviour, how graciously didst thou bear all the inhuman cruelty of thine enemies.

I give thee thanks for the holy silence with which, in thy meekness, thou didst meet all the false accusations and countless insults uttered against thee before Pilate and Herod. *As a meek lamb* thou *didst not open* thy *mouth.*†

Glory be to the Father, etc.

* Luke xxii 64. † Isa. liii 7.

Fourth Interior Conversation with Jesus

I adore, praise and glorify thee, O Lord Jesus Christ; I bless thee and thank thee, Son of the living God, for allowing thyself to be treated with contempt and derision, when *Herod with his army set* thee *at nought, and mocked* thee, *putting on* thee *a white garment, and sent* thee *back to Pilate.**

I give thee thanks for enduring for us that most bitter pain, when, in the hall, the soldiers stripped thee, bound thee to the pillar and cruelly scourged thee, whence the whole of thy tender and virginal flesh was pitifully torn with lashes.

I give thee thanks for being *wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins,*† and for allowing thy sacred Blood to flow in streams to the ground.

I give thee thanks for the profound patience thou didst display, when, stripping thee, they put a scarlet cloak about thee; and plaiting a crown of thorns they put it upon thy head and a reed in thy right hand; and bowing the knee before thee, they mocked thee, saying: *Hail, King of the Jews ! and spitting upon* thee, *they took the reed and struck* thy *head.*‡ In

* Luke xxiii 11. † Isa. liii 5.
‡ Matt. xxvii 28-30.

all these and other insults and torments never once didst thou show the least sign of indignation or impatience, but most meekly didst thou bear all for me.

I offer thee thanks for the shame thou didst suffer for me, when thou camest forth, *bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment,* and *Pilate said to them : Behold the Man,** and when thou wert unjustly condemned by Pilate to die upon the cross.

I give thee thanks for the heavy burden and the fatigue thou didst suffer for me when Pilate delivered thee to them to be crucified; when they took thee and led thee forth; when bearing thine own cross on thy bruised and wounded shoulders thou didst go *forth to that place which is called Calvary.*†

I give thee thanks for thine example, when *they gave* thee *wine to drink mingled with gall;*‡ for tasting its bitterness, though thou wouldst not relieve thy weakness by drinking it.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

Fifth Interior Conversation with Jesus

I adore, praise and glorify thee, O Lord Jesus Christ; I bless and thank thee, Son of the living God, for bearing for me those bitter

* John xix 5. † John xix 17.
‡ Matt. xxvii 34.

pains, when thy wounds were renewed by the stripping of thy garments, and when thy tender hands and thy holy feet were fastened to the cross; when *they dug thy hands and thy feet and numbered all thy bones.**

I give thee thanks for the outpouring of thy most precious Blood, which thou didst shed abundantly from thy wounds as *fountains of the Saviour.*† To thee be praise, honour and glory for ever and ever, for each red drop of thy Blood, O my Lord Jesus.

I give thee thanks for that unspeakable meekness and charity with which thou didst patiently bear the mocking insults and blasphemies of wicked men, when *they that passed by blasphemed* thee, *wagging their heads and saying: Vah, thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days buildest it up again, save thyself, coming down from the cross;*‡ and when thou didst pray for those that crucified and derided thee, saying: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*§

I give thee thanks for the love with which thou didst endure those torments beyond all understanding, when, with hands and feet nailed to the cross, thou didst hang between two thieves; and when thou didst see thy most sweet Mother, her heart pierced with

* Ps. xxi 17.
† Isa. xii 3.
‡ Mark xv 29, 30.
§ Luke xxiii 34.

the sword of compassion and melting with love, standing by the cross.

I give thee thanks for suffering that grievous thirst, when, before thy death, *one running and filling a sponge with vinegar, and putting it on a reed, gave* thee *to drink.**

I give thee thanks for that loving-kindness and mercy with which thou, who givest life to all, bowing thy venerable head, didst deign to die for me. May everlasting glory be to thee for the separation of thy most excellent soul from thine immaculate body.

I give thee thanks for that holy Blood and saving water, which flowed from thy sacred Heart, when *one of the soldiers with a spear opened* thy *side, and immediately there came forth blood and water.*†

I give thee thanks for the burial of thy most pure body, and for thy glorious Resurrection and Ascension, and for sending the Holy Ghost.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

Sixth Interior Conversation with Jesus

I adore, praise and glorify thee, O Lord Jesus Christ; I bless and thank thee, Son of the living God, because thou didst will that thy most holy body should be grievously

* Mark xv 36. † John xix 34.

afflicted for my sake. I salute the suffering members of thy body for thy honour and love.

Hail, immaculate Feet of my Lord, for my sake so often weary, and for my salvation pierced with nails.

Hail, most venerable Knees, for my sake so often bent in prayer and worn with fatigue.

Hail, beauteous Breast, for my sake disfigured with bruises and wounds.

Hail, most holy Side, for my sake opened by the lance.

Hail, Heart most loving, gracious and full of sweetness, wounded for love of me. Hail, incomparable treasury of all good and all happiness. Be to me, I beseech thee, a protecting shade in death, and after death an everlasting home.

Hail, most holy Back, for my sake torn with scourges and made red with blood.

Hail, Arms most sweet and beloved, for my sake stretched out upon the cross.

Hail, Hands most delicate, for my sake cruelly pierced through with nails.

Hail, most lovely Shoulders, for my sake bowed down and wounded under the heavy cross.

Hail, most pure Neck, for my sake wounded with cruel blows.

Hail, most sweet Mouth and Throat, that, for my sake, drank the bitter draught of gall and vinegar.

Hail, most gracious Face, for my sake defiled with spittle and bruised with hard blows.

Hail, most kind Ears, for my sake assailed with foul insults.

Hail, most blessed Eyes, for my sake flowing with tears.

Hail, venerable Head, for my sake crowned with thorns, wounded and struck with the reed.

I salute, most merciful Jesus, thy whole Body, for my sake scourged, torn, crucified, dead and buried.

I salute thy most precious Blood, shed to the last drop for me.

I salute thy most noble Soul, for my sake filled with sorrow, and straitened with heavy grief.

Jesus, most worthy of love, make holy all my members, I beseech thee, by thy most holy members, and blot out all the stains of sin which I have ever received by the misuse of my members.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

SEVENTH INTERNAL PRAYER

Seventh Interior Conversation with Jesus

I adore, praise and glorify thee, O Lord Jesus Christ; I bless thee and thank thee, Son of the living God, for all thy wounds, and especially for those five adorable wounds which, as the splendid seals of my redemption and of my reconciliation to thee, thou dost keep in thy risen body.

I salute thee, my Beloved, and with all devotion kiss the roseate wound of thy right foot; and I beg of thee, through it, to give me full pardon of all my sins.

I salute thee, my most merciful Saviour, and with all devotion kiss the lovely wound of thy left foot, and I beg of thee through it to restore all the ruins of my wasted life.

I salute thee, desired of my heart, and with all devotion kiss the bright wound of thy right hand; and I pray to thee, through it, to mortify in me whatever is displeasing to thee.

I salute thee, my Beloved, and with all devotion I kiss the roseate wound of thy left hand; and I pray thee to give me, through it, every inward grace that may be pleasing to thee.

I salute thee, Lord most sweet, and with all devotion I kiss the loving wound of thy most holy side; and I pray thee that, through it,

thou wouldst deign so to draw me and carry me away into thyself, that I may be entirely joined to thee, and made one spirit with thee.

Do thou, O Lord, hide me within thy blessed wounds, and grant that I may draw from them thy true love and everlasting salvation. Imprint thy wounds on my heart, with thy most precious Blood, that I may read in them thy sorrow, and also thy love. May the memory of them always remain in the inmost sanctuary of my heart, that it may arouse within me sorrow of compassion for thee, and that the flame of love may be kindled within me.

May I find in thy wounds at all times, but especially at the hour of my death, a sure refuge and safe protection.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

Eighth Interior Conversation with Jesus

I adore and glorify thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, who dost deign to unite to thyself the souls of those who love thee perfectly. O Son of the living God, I, who abound in sin and am void of merit, am unworthy to draw nigh to thee; but behold, I offer thee, for all the offences I have committed against thee, and for all the good that is wanting in me,

whatever thou hast willed to do, speak and suffer for me.

I offer to thee whatever hath pleased thee in thy most glorious Mother, the Virgin Mary, and the rest of the saints.

Wrap up, I beseech thee, my whole life, all unworthy and unclean as it is, in the winding-sheet of thine innocence and of thy merits; adorn me with the most perfect virtues of thy Manhood, and thus adorned, unite me inseparably to thyself.

O life-giving gem of divine excellence, unfading flower of human dignity, Jesus, wounded for me, wound, I beseech thee, and pierce my inmost heart with the dart of thy love, so that it may hold nothing earthly, but may be contained only by the power of thy Godhead.

Grant, my beloved, that I may aspire to thee with all my heart, with full desire, and with a soul thirsting for thee, and that so I may be refreshed by thy sweetness.

Grant that my whole spirit and all within me may always sigh after thee, who art true beatitude. May burning charity ever wholly consume me, and intimately unite me to thee and transform me into thee, so that thou in me, and I in thee, may have joy in one another, now in time, and hereafter in eternity.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

Ninth Interior Conversation with Mary, the Virgin Mother of God

Hail, white lily of the bright and ever-peaceful Trinity! Hail, blossoming rose of everlasting beauty! Hail, illustrious Queen of heaven, flowing with unspeakable delights, O Virgin Mary.

Of thee, O blessed one, did Jesus Christ, King of heaven, *brightness of his Father's glory*,* will to be born, and by thy milk to be fed. Thou didst wrap him in swaddling bands; carry him in thine arms; cherish him in thy bosom; cover him with embraces and kisses. May he vouchsafe, by thy intercession, to feed my soul with his inflowing graces.

O my singular Advocate, turn thy merciful eyes upon me. Obtain for me by thy prayers the full remission of all my sins, perfect self-denial and mortification. Obtain for me a heart pure, meek, full of kindness for others, and wounded by the love of thy most sweet Son. Obtain for me true freedom and detachment of spirit, that my Lord Jesus Christ himself may find me in peace and joy.

I venerate thee; I call upon thee; I offer to thee, to increase thy joy, the Heart of thine only Son, and I beg of thee lovingly to help

* Heb. i 3.

and comfort me during the whole time of my exile here below, and especially at the hour of my death. Amen.

Tenth Interior Conversation with all the Saints and Angels of God

Hail, ye men and women, saints of God, who, having received everlasting happiness, praise the Lord with continual joy. Hail, ye angel spirits, who always see with gladness the lovely face of God. Hail, holy angel, my most faithful guardian, to whose care I have been given by the Lord.

You are the lovely flowers of heaven, wonderfully adorning the heavenly Jerusalem. I venerate you; I invoke you, and I offer to you, for the increase of your joy and glory, that treasure-house of all good and of all bliss, the Heart of Jesus Christ, sweeter than honey.

I give thanks to our Lord God himself, who chose you and prevented you with his blessings. I thank him for all the good things he hath bestowed upon you.

O blessed friends of God, obtain for me by your prayers full pardon for all my sins, perfect self-denial and mortification. Obtain for me true detachment and freedom of spirit and burning love for God, that the Lord himself may be able to find his delight in me.

Pray for me now and at the hour of my death, that, helped by your prayers, I may at length give glory to the eternal Trinity with you in that most sweet country where one day is better than a thousand, where God himself is all that the loving soul can desire. Amen.

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